

# *Our Time*



I KNEW A GENIUS

By PAUL MAHONY

BRINGING UP A 'HIGHBROW' By DAVID PITT

FACING THE NEW MUSIC By A. E. BALLARD

JULY—AUGUST 1949

SIXPENCE



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# Our Time

Incorporating  
Poetry and the People

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## THE 'MODERNS' STAND THEIR TRIAL

IN a speech the other day Field Marshal Earl Wavell criticised much modern poetry as "ugly and obscure." He is not the only one recently to have attacked the moderns.

Sir Alfred Munnings, president of the Royal Academy, was even less flattering—and more violent—about modern art, and there are many people who, as Mr. A. E. Ballard points out in his article *Facing the New Music* on another page, call modern music "just a noise."

Are Lord Wavell, Sir Alfred and the rest right or wrong? Are they merely unadventurous has-beens who have reached the age when life belongs to the past; or are they men whose views may be uncomfortably near the truth?

Consider Lord Wavell. You may ask what can a soldier know about poetry? The answer, in the case of this soldier, is quite a lot. His prose writing reveals the heart of the poet and although we are not sure that he has actually written any verse there is certainly a poem in the title—*Other Men's Flowers*—of the anthology of verse he published in 1944.

He gave more of his views on modern poetry in this volume. He wrote: "To my poor ear and old-fashioned understanding most modern poetry lacks dignity and has neither beauty nor tune; magic is replaced by unintelligibility; and the only mystery to me is that anyone reads much of it."

Then later: "A poet is a man to whom vision is given beyond his fellows. Of what use is this vision if he expresses it in words unintelligible to all but a small circle, and doubtfully to them? The world soon begins to suspect that he has no vision, and is therefore no poet. And without vision, as the prophet said, the people perish . . ."

These are balanced views—whether you agree with them or not. They are the views, too, of many thousands of thoughtful people whose striving to keep up with the moderns all too often ends in bewilderment.

It is because we believe that these views cannot be lightly dismissed that we suggest that it is time that the moderns stand their trial. We propose, with the help of our readers, to give them a chance of rendering an account of themselves—and at the same time to conduct an inquiry into the whole controversy of Old v. New.

Thus we may discover who is more nearly right; Ezra Pound or Lord Wavell;

Henry Moore or Sir Alfred Munnings; the men and women who deal in "obscure" poetry, painting and music or the people who pass them by and turn back to Keats, Constable and Beethoven.

Such an inquiry is, as you will agree, a tall order and we shall almost certainly fail to get all the results we hope for. But if we get some results it will have been useful.

A necessary first step, it seems to us, is to settle the question of whether "obscure" modern verse is really incomprehensible to all but the writer of it. This is where our readers can help by joining in an experiment.

We want you to study the verse below—*A Poem*, by T. E. F. Blackburn—and to submit your interpretation of it.

Next month we shall publish several of your interpretations together with Mr. Blackburn's own. The comparison should be instructive and will determine the next stage in our investigation.

If, for instance, it turns out that the verse really is obscure to all but Mr. Blackburn we shall feel entitled to ask him to state his claims for calling it poetry and to explain the necessity for adopting the obscure form. He is as interested in this as we are and has agreed to enter the witness box. We hope that other poets, and artists, will follow him later.

Mr. Blackburn assures us, by the way, that his verse expresses an exact idea capable of objective interpretation. It has not been published before and will be completely fresh to readers. Here it is:—

Sometime there nothing shall my man  
me more;

Shall sea outside such lands me inland  
grave,

Who then shall go, unguest is, who  
inghosts

This clouded glass am I, his burnings  
flaw.

Sometime the splintered hour glass  
spills its time,

Sandgrain on sandgrain grating, as I  
keel

Outside the ticking reefs, that minute-  
hand

No more, as I unlock through chime  
by chime.

Sometime is when I am whose dream  
am I,

Who wills me nightmare out his knot-  
cord need;

Unravelling to his ghost, I undiscord  
The coiled by arteries in which we  
bleed.



# FACING THE NEW MUSIC

by A. E. Ballard

EVERYBODY knows the expression "We shall have to face the music." Why then do so many people run away, at least from contemporary music? They will listen to performances of *The Messiah* year after year; they appear to be quite satisfied to hear Beethoven's Fifth Symphony or Tchaikowsky's Piano Concerto over and over again; but as soon as an announcer mentions Frank Martin or Khachaturyan sets are snapped off from Margate to Merioneth and from Thames to Tweed.

In some cases the listener's age may have something to do with it; some people are mentally old before they are forty. Usually as the creative faculty declines the unfamiliar becomes less and less attractive; curiosity is blunted and the youthful taste for adventure atrophies. Plato appears to have been on the side of the elderly when he wrote: "The introduction of a new kind of music must be spurned as imperilling the whole state, since styles of music are never disturbed without affecting the most important political institutions."

Now older and less adaptable minds have a considerable influence on the programmes of most of the concerts given in this country, with the important exception of those by the B.B.C. The cost of presenting orchestral or chamber music is so heavy that the average price of tickets is bound to be higher than most young people can afford, except very occasionally. Concert organisers are therefore dependent on their affluent—that is to say middle-aged if not elderly, patrons—and it is not surprising if they consider conservative tastes. If the programme has a pronounced modern slant there will be some ugly gaps in the more expensive seats. The man who pays to hear the piper, if he doesn't actually call the tune, will not listen twice to a programme he does not like.

Even younger people, perhaps weary after a day's work or sometimes just plain lazy, often prefer the known to the unknown. We imagine from hearsay, or perhaps from experience of just one difficult piece of contemporary music, that listening to the moderns is heavy

Why is modern music "just a noise" to many of us? Is it our fault or the composer's? Before you decide, remember that Beethoven was once thought "unintelligible" and Mozart was considered "cacophonous."

going and we choose a programme of old favourites and familiar melodies.

Cyril Scott points out in his book *Music*, that it is not the conscious mind which resists a new idea, but the unconscious. Psychologists go even further: they maintain that the unconscious is always prompting us to satisfy a deep craving to return to those happy, irresponsible nursery days and the security of familiar things.

"Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle,  
The cow jumped over the moon."

Easier on the ear, isn't it, than the intricate rhythmical patterns of say, Moeran's *Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra*?

But that's not the only reason, or even the main one, why some of us would rather hear the old tunes. They represent a flight from reality, an escape from the difficult and unpleasant.

Life and art tend to swing between escapism and realism. While the Realists keep their vision fixed on life as it is, the Escapists (or Romantics) take refuge in any situation away from contemporary reality. They write or read fairy tales, legends and cloak and dagger novels; they revel in the exotic, half-savage beauty of Tchaikowsky's *Mazeppa*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* or Borodin's *Prince Igor*.

Nearly all the great masters have indulged a little in escapism. Shakespeare probably enjoyed writing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* just as much as *King Lear*. Beethoven composed some charming *Bagatelles*; Elgar gave us *The Wand of Youth* as well as *The Dream of Gerontius*. They would not have been human or sane, if they had been serious all the time.

Many writers and composers who show marked escapist tendencies in youth

become as they mature more realistic (or mystic, which is the next stage). Victor Hugo, who at the age of thirty was one of the leaders of the French Romantic movement, passed from the romanticism of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* to the realism of *Les Misérables*. We can trace a similar development, culminating in mysticism this time, in the works of Sibelius and Vaughan Williams.

Now the reason why some people do not like modern music is because their opinions of its functions are opposed to the views held by most contemporary composers. Wordsworth has expressed in one packed phrase, intended to describe poetry but equally applicable to music, all that the Escapists want . . . "emotion recollected in tranquillity." The Escapists want music which appeals to their emotions. They expect to feel joy, delight, exhilaration. They are not averse to shuddering over the macabre music of Schubert's *Erl King* or of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. They do not object to having their feelings harrowed (for a short while) by Tchaikowsky's *Romeo and Juliet* or his Fifth Symphony. They even enjoy a good cry over Noel Coward's *Bitter Sweet*.

But all this suffering, this emotion, is vicarious and imaginary. The public knows that it is not real. It all happened to someone else, far away, long ago. Like all recollected emotion, the sting has gone out of it. And the result is—tranquillity. The composer, if he is to be popular, must look back calmly from the heights beyond. In Beethoven's music there may be storms, but they subside; grief, but it is consoled. In Tchaikowsky there is conflict, but it is resolved. Everything ends peacefully, or at least in resignation.

But surely it is time we realised that the days of "emotion recollected in tran-



**POSE FOR COMPOSERS.** *These not-so-fearsome looking people write music to which many are afraid to listen. Taken at the fifth annual Festival of British Contemporary Music in July, the picture shows: Richard Arnell, Dr. Gordon Jacob, Richard Hall, Phyllis Tate, Philip Sainton and E. J. Moeran.*

quillity" are over. Writers and composers may need to work in seclusion but they no longer live in or even dream of ivory towers. When they are not actually writing or composing, they are down in the fray, playing their part in politics and social service, fighting in war or striving for peace. Conceived in the strenuous world of today, their music is virile, immediate, hard-hitting. They think as well as feel: they have something urgent to say, and they demand that we exercise our minds until we understand. It is not enough just to sit, ready to sop up emotion like a sponge.

The composer, more than any of us, is hyper-sensitive to the atmosphere of his age. In the 1920's Honegger, Hindemith and others were assimilating into their music the new noises of the twentieth century; the rumble of motorised traffic, the din of factories, the roar of aeroplanes. By the 1930's many composers had passed from the recording of actuality to pre-vision. Whilst the complacency of the average British citizen was unruffled by the menace of Nazism and Fascism in Europe, Benjamin Britten's *Ballad for Heroes*, his testimony to the significance of the Spanish Civil War, had a prophetic quality unperceived at the time but crystal clear today. William Walton in his first symphony and Vaughan Williams in his fourth foretold the years of violence and chaos which we were so soon to live through.

Since then what suffering and disloca-

tion has come to European composers! Their very souls have been seared by the agony of air raids, concentration camps, Hiroshima, the reality of the cold war now and the fear of atomic warfare in the future. For the past ten years what tranquillity have they known in which to recollect anything but horrors?

Yet from such physical and spiritual experiences we expect composers to distil not discord, which surely is inevitable, but "melodies of linked sweetness long drawn out" such as we imagine we hear throughout the music of the classics.

This question of discord in modern music has been talked about more than it has been thought about. What is discord, exactly? It might be described as an unusual, and on first hearing, unsatisfactory combination of sounds. On first hearing, notice. Because we so quickly get used to what we originally termed discords that we no longer notice them. That is why we imagine there are none in the music of the eighteenth and nineteenth century masters, although their contemporaries were acutely aware of them, and protested just as loudly as we do—or did—over the discords of Schönberg, Bliss or Martinu. They found Beethoven's music "unintelligible." As for Mozart (Mozart, of all people) his music was—"cacophonous"!

Now, the sooner we face up to our dislike of discord—or dissonance—the better. It is not a psychological trait to be proud of; but a sign of mental complacency, if not of actual stagnation.

The resilient mind takes a discord in its stride. As Cyril Scott has said: "the effect of dissonance is to make the thinker less conventionally minded." It should have a bracing effect, like a cold douche on a hot day.

In any case we may as well get used to it, since it appears to be both a technical and a psychological necessity. Technical, because too much sweetness cloy: composers cannot be for ever using the same combinations of notes. "Musicians should not base their art on the laws of the past," wrote Moussorgsky, "but on the needs of the future."

Psychologically, dissonance is necessary because, like certain violent shapes and colours in painting, it is the obvious way of expressing the ugliness and wrong thinking in our modern life.

It has always been the mark of the great artist in every medium and in every age that he has searched diligently for the truth, both about himself and about his world. He has tried to portray this truth honestly and completely as far as he could see it. Century by century composers have discovered and expressed in their music a fresh aspect of it, but always the common man has at first refused to accept their findings. Now we are living in a singularly exhilarating age musically and one that will be long remembered. If only we could make up our minds to lay our prejudices and our laziness aside we should find that to face the music of our time would be—to enjoy it.

# FLASHBACK

by Michael Millis

The acting was often bad  
and the plots ridiculous, but  
there was magic in the  
silent screen.

**H**AVE the movies lost their magic? Several phenomena of recent months suggest it—the crowds who went on pilgrimage to the Hampstead heights to see D. W. Griffith's 30-year-old *Intolerance*; the successful return flight of Valentino's *The Eagle* after a quarter-century migration in the underworld of Wardour-street; the box office mogul's frank admission that the new crop of stars lack the magnetism of their predecessors; the nostalgic delight with which newspapers hailed the return of the old-time serial (announced somewhat surprisingly via the import tables of *The Board of Trade Journal*); and the renewed trek to Hampstead to watch Emil Jannings shuffling his way through—significant title—*The Last Laugh*.

It was, however, none of these things, but a paragraph in a publicity hand-out from Hollywood which set me thinking of the days when the cinema, like a well-behaved infant, was seen but never heard and Miss Gloria Swanson was the queen of all my Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. It concerned that distinguished patron of the brighter bathtub, Mr. Cecil B. de Mille who after nearly forty years as a director is stepping round to the other side of the camera.

## The Greener Years

The film is *Sunset Boulevard*, a tale of Hollywood's greener years with the same Miss Swanson (a grandmother now) as the star.

Whenever I see a de Mille picture today I am transported mentally to the converted skating rink where I first discovered the movies. The cheaper seats were wooden benches and the floor lacked covering but Mary Pickford welcomed me with a coy smile from her frame on the wall, Douglas Fairbanks saw me out with a wave of his Robin Hood hat and at matinees (Saturdays excepted) there were free cups of tea and rock cakes to sustain me through

three hours of fire, murder, famine and William S. Hart.

The music for the newsreels sprang from the knobby fingers of the proprietor's elder sister, a pale, wispy pianist whose hardly venturesome taste ran to Mendelssohn for weddings, Chopin for funerals and *Hearts of Oak* for naval manoeuvres. She was generally reliable but had her berserk moments during one of which she sent the funeral of a prominent general trotting down the Strand to *The Dark-Town Strutters' Ball*.

For the feature film she was joined by "our orchestra," a hard-worked trio of musicians including a violinist whose soothing style made him a favourite with the women in the audience. His appearance, as I remember it, was reminiscent of a limelit ruin. His nose was a Corinthian column surmounted by a flying buttress of pince-nez. Beneath it flowed a moat of moustache. He wore a frock coat, a knitted tie and a collar like Dr. Crippen's.

## Bobbing Head

His height was not great and to follow the film he stood on an upturned box that set his eyes on a level with the bottom of the screen. Whatever Monty Blue, Bessie Love or Mary Miles Minter was doing in the movie there would be the violinist's head bobbing at their feet like a Cup Final football.

But the real moment of glory came during the interval. Then a spotlight would play on him as he gave a "special musical interlude," scraping his way through *Softly Awakes My Heart* or *Chanson Hindoue* while his feminine admirers hummed the tune softly and tapped feet that had stood all day at the kitchen sink or behind the shop counter.

Such romantic fiddling was obviously exhausting work and as the performances were continuous he had little time to slip out for refreshment. So every night, half-way through the main feature, a boy would be sent to the Black Bull to fetch his supper and as Ben Hur won his chariot race or the Hunchback climbed the towers of Notre Dame the bow of the picture-palace Paganini would falter for an instant while he took a swill from a bottle of beer or nibbled a pickled onion.

The films of those days fell into sharply defined categories. There were the westerns with Tom Mix rounding up the cattle rustlers and wearing a bigger stetson every time one saw him and the easterns with well-scrubbed minarets, nicely laundered sand, well-starched palm trees and Miss Myrna Loy slink-

ing around in a veil and slave bangles like Mrs. Thin Man at the Chelsea Arts Ball.

There were the historical epics that sacked Troy, sank the Armada or re-fought Waterloo (always with an all-star cast) and the high-kicking, flaming youth dramas with the merry-eyed, prettily plump Clara Bow and a very young and not so angular Joan Crawford.

There were the slapstick comedies and the purple-flavoured love stories and the horror tales with Mary Philbin fleeing from the monster, her dark hair streaming in the wind.

When I think of them I see only odd scenes, like flashes from an old trailer. Some are violent—manacled hands twitching in the sand as Pharaoh's chariots ride over the slaves in *The Ten Commandments*; a man being scalped in *The Covered Wagon*, trembling-lipped Lillian Gish sliding under the guillotine in *Orphans of the Storm*; the knife of Jack the Ripper gleaming in the twisted shadows of *Waxworks*.

Some are funny—Harold Lloyd clinging to the hands of a clock high above the street in *Safety Last*; cross-eyed Sheriff Ben Turpin consistently getting his man but never the right one; Harry Langdon, as a convict, trying to saw through his chains with a nail file in *Tramp, Tramp, Tramp*; Chaplin bathing the baby in *The Kid*.

## Pathetic Chaplin

Some are pathetic—Emil Jannings discovering his wife's unfaithfulness in *Vaudeville*, Pola Negri in *They Knew What They Wanted* finding that the man she had promised to marry, but had never seen was plain and fat and not a bit like the handsome portrait he had sent her; Chaplin again, eagerly laying the table for a party in *The Gold Rush* and sitting down to wait for guests who never come.

The people of the silent screen were seldom complicated. The heroes were good. The villains were bad. The heroines were simple. The old fathers were either martinets or roaring ruffians ruined by drink. The old mothers died slow deaths to a few lingering bars of Tchaikowsky or went over the hill to the poor house, dragging a bundle behind them. One knew a bad girl by the swing of her hips and a good girl by her goompish expression.

The acting was often thick-sliced ham. The actors, men and women, had black lips, charcoal eyebrows and dark rings round their eyes as if they had been look-

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# I Knew a Genius

by PAUL MAHONY

The world knew Maeterlinck, the Master. Paul Mahony, his private secretary for five years, was one of the few who knew the sad-eyed man who, when asked "Would you have chosen to be born?" replied "Of course not."

"I HEREBY order that my body be cremated and then taken to a secret place known only to my beloved wife, there to be interred without pomp or ceremony." Thus Maurice Maeterlinck, shy in death as he was in life, instructed his executors in his last will and testament. Always a mystic, he could not resist this one last touch of mystery.

Well do I remember my first meeting with him back in 1940, soon after his arrival, a refugee from the Nazis. A lady whom I had known in Europe told me that the Belgian dramatist was having trouble with his articles for American magazines (his main source of dollar income) and was not getting along with the assistants sent him by editors to help him with the contemporary technique. She thought that my knowledge of his work (I have been a student of Maeterlinck since my early years) combined with what she called "an Irish mystical nature" might be the answer to his difficulties.

So when I received an invitation to meet the master and his young wife at luncheon I grew cold with fear lest my dream of what he was like would be shattered; lest the man and his works might be twain. I need not have worried for no one who has read those mystical essays of his, *Wisdom and Destiny*, *The Treasure Of The Humble*, etc., and has penetrated to the mind beneath could be disappointed with his extraordinary personality.

When he rose to greet me, smiling, any doubts I had fled forever. There was in the poise of the head a strong suggestion of the poet he was. One lock of a mass of white hair fell across his eyes, almost an intentional curtain; and in those eyes was the reflection of the mystical imagination. The sensitive curve of the brow was in strange contrast to a square chin proclaiming obstinacy.

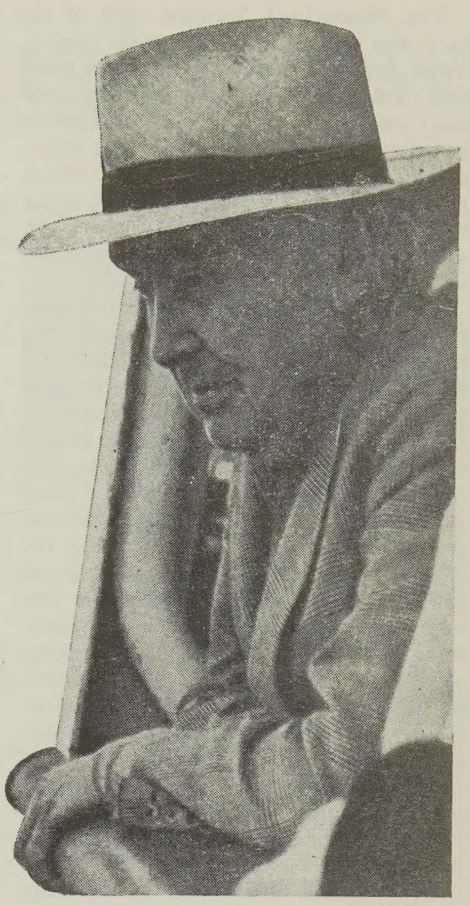
Here was the high priest of dreaming youth; remote, intimate, terrible; yet kindly; a true mystic knowing no English though his French was animated and

came in a singing torrent. It was incredibly easy to talk, having known his mind through his work almost all my life. Through the echoing restaurant the pageant of his characters passed in my mind's eye: Mélisande, Pelléas, Tytil and Mytil, Ygraine and Selyseete, the Maeterlinckian princesses. They were all there and issuing whole and perfect from those blazing almond-shaped hazel eyes, and the unimportant room became a stage on which they appeared and disappeared before my eyes.

I had the privilege of working with him on about a dozen articles for various American national magazines, mostly on the conduct of life. He would make a draft and I would work it over with a view to presentation before the restless, literal minds of the American reading audience. Sometimes Maeterlinck would be irritated by the resultant translation. "Why don't you get the janitor to do this work and stop bothering me?" he would ask good-humouredly. For it was essential that the articles did not go too far beneath the surface.

Profundities would come from his pen effortlessly. Whenever a piece did appear it would draw good fan mail. Many people would write in asking if it was true Maeterlinck was still alive. Once after doing a piece for a certain self-help magazine there was a curious sequel. I learned from a friend belonging to the organisation called Alcoholics Anonymous that a recalcitrant member came to a meeting one day bringing a copy of the magazine wherein our article appeared. He read it aloud, then declared that it had made such an impression upon him that he would never relapse again (which he never did). On hearing this strange story, Maeterlinck said rather cynically: "Thank God I've managed to help someone these days!"

Meanwhile, the master was busy writing plays. "My life is just a story of a man with pen and paper," he would say. And he might have added, "dictaphone" for in recent years he used one. He has left behind about twenty unpro-



THE EXILE RETURNS

*Maeterlinck's last voyage brought him home to the South of France in 1947 after seven years in America.*

duced plays, perhaps a little too sensitive for the current naturalistic taste.

No writer possessed the power of abstraction to such a marked degree. He lived in an ineffable cloud-land, far above the earth and the prosaic doings of man. No millionaire could aspire to the treasures of this extraordinary being. He was lord of a fortune that no tax collector could devastate. Here was a king whose subjects never gave trouble, a parent whose children never developed mumps or measles or bad manners!

The great dramatist could step from his New York apartment into an ivory tower where everything was an eternal land of fancy. And he readily admitted to me that he owed most of the ideas for his epic *Blue Bird* play to dream sources. How delightful it must have been to dream such dreams, especially to be able to imprison them within the printed page so that all the world could share them.

Yes, Maeterlinck was the man of all men who should have been most happy. Yet if you were fortunate enough to meet him (and some royalties were more easily met) you would not have taken him to be an exuberantly happy man. His voice, clothed in a nasal Flemish accent which gave a sing-song to all he said, spoke with a sighing melancholy. His eyes, very alert, gave a hint of chronic weariness.

As year followed year of close association with him and his charming wife, it was sad to see him become more and more embittered by old age. Of many precious conversations which I had with him, one especially is enshrined in my memory. I was spending a few days with him and his wife at Lake Placid. Maeterlinck and I were sitting under the pines, scented and dense, watching the shimmering water. There was a ruined tower, a seat by a well, and the sun was just going down over White Face Mountain. Maeterlinck had been talking about out-living himself and apropos of this he suddenly leaned forward into his favourite attitude, elbows on his knees and finger-tips lightly touching. He had the air of rousing himself from an eternal contemplation. "If you would have willed it, would you have been born?" he asked.

The question came like a thunder-clap. I was too staggered for an immediate reply. "That's too tall a question for me to answer right away. But what about you? Would you have been born?" And he shot back, almost brutally: "Of course not!"

Any subtle observer could have seen what he was driving at. As he uttered those terrible words, he gave a shrug of fatal resignation. A decrepit frame was hard to take for one so young in spirit. Only his eyes and his heart were young.

On another occasion I asked him what was the happiest period of his life. He stood up, turned his back to the room, and looked down upon me from his bent height. "Only the fool and the very young expect happiness in this world," he said gravely. "The wise only hope not to be bored."

I countered this with the fact that he had enjoyed more worldly success than almost any of his contemporaries. "Whatever," he said, "the world may think of me and my work is now of little consequence; but one thing is a comfort to me in my old age—that none of my works, written since the days of my early youth, contains one line I would wish to blot out. This is a real comfort to me."

Maeterlinck's memories went back a long way. He befriended Oscar Wilde

when that poet was an exile in France. Although he never became a member of any group of poets his early friends were such figures as Octave Mirbeau, Villiers de Lisle Adam, Huysman and Emil Verhaeren.

Death held no terrors for Maeterlinck, for he had been thinking about it the greater part of his life and his essays on it are the most sublime written in any language. "Death can claim me whenever it likes. I ask no reprieve," he would laugh sometimes.

The last time I saw him he was sailing home to Europe. Reporters crowded outside his cabin, but he refused to be interviewed. Mediating for the pressman, I begged him to make a statement. Silently he took a blank telegraph form and wrote in French these moving words. "I leave but do not quit America; America that will remain ever

#### MAETERLINCK

**Maurice Polydore Marie Bernard Maeterlinck, poet, dramatist and mystic, was born in Ghent in 1862 and died in May this year. He was 86.**

**Unsuccessful as a barrister—he was handicapped by a harsh, thin voice—he decided to write. At 28 he ran off his first small book on a hand-press.**

**By 1895 he had written a book of poems and eight plays—notably *Pelléas and Mélisande*, which later served Debussy.**

**He achieved world fame with his fantasy "*The Blue Bird*," produced at the Haymarket in 1909. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1911.**

in my heart; America the trustee of civilisation, the custodian of peace."

Maeterlinck's work is a perfect prism on to which will ever shine the light of truth. Even a careless reader cannot fail to discern the classical dignity of his aim. In some of it there is a charming thought which is applicable to him at this time. It is that the dead are never really dead until they are forgotten. Maurice Maeterlinck will never really die for the light of his lyrics will radiate into a distant posterity. But a great light has gone out of the lives of those who knew him personally. The beloved Belgian, for whom man and nature were inseparable, was the last of the great individual minds.

# Quatorze Juillet

by Marcel Urbach

**T**HIS was our first quatorze juillet in France, the day to which we had been looking forward so anxiously and of which we expected so much.

The night was closing in. We went to the hotel on top of the downs; there was a dance, our hostess believed. Our way led through the small, deserted fishing village of the Landes.

The sea spoke in a loud voice and the wind blew and carried the sand grain by grain on to the land covering the decaying houses. Decay as Picasso or Moore would have painted it.

"Un apéritif, quelque chose typiquement landais," we ordered from the waiter.

He looked very Parisian, black oiled hair, a black Menjou-moustache and a charming, melancholy smile flickering in the corners of his mouth. Heaven knows what brought him to this lonely place.

"Quelque chose typiquement landais?" He looked at us in surprise and shook his head.

After a while he came back: "Je regrette, il n'y a rien!" he said, "Il n'y a rien que du sable." And the melancholy smile crept from the corners of his mouth up into his eyes. He shrugged his shoulders in resignation.

Of course there was no dance and no feast in this place. "Quatorze juillet? Je m'en fiche pas mal. They work very hard here, m'sieur, and the fishermen are too tired to feast. And feasts, oh la la, ça coûte!"

We were very disappointed, like children standing under a Christmas tree with empty hands. What else could we do but go back to our sleeping place?

The moon had risen in the meantime and dipped the village in an uncertain light and made the ruins appear still more desperate and ragged.

It was very quiet but for the dogs which howled through the night in long, persistent cries, like jackals. . . .

The sea spoke in a loud voice, and the wind played with the sand. Grain by grain dripped on the crumbling walls, slowly and timeless.

This was our first quatorze juillet—

# Bringing up a 'Highbrow'

by DAVID PITT

A child of five can learn to love  
Shakespeare . . . but it all  
depends on the parents.

EVERY teacher knows that children must have Art and Literature. And most teachers know the baffling disappointment of seeing their boys and girls pass out of their hands without knowing the first thing about these subjects when spelt with a small "a" and a small "l."

There are pictures on the school walls, good books in the cupboards and music on the gramophone or wireless. No one can complain of lack of quantity even in these days of general shortage.

Yet most children still grow up with the idea that the arts are not part of life but things that you either have time for or you haven't. A young apprentice engineer might read poetry somewhat furtively at home. He would not think of opening a discussion about it with his mates.

Most of his generation had literature knocked out of them when, treated as a subject at school, it became a bore. Without any regard for the boys' absorption with sport, adventure and detection, classics unrelated to anything in their real life or their dream life were plugged into them until they revolted. The *Rover*, *Skipper* and *Wizard* lay just in view in a half-opened desk while Walter Scott was going on frantically outside. This situation is not much better today.

With this prospect in view many parents (not necessarily intellectuals) who have learned to sort out the good from the bad, are wondering how they can fortify their children against this dissolution of the artistic sense in the schools. How early can they introduce their boys and girls to art, literature and music in such a way that they will be proof against later assaults?

Young children are natural artists. Their play, their talk, their clown-like dances at the toddling stage, the drawing of a wide-open mouth with a tail at the



"It may be best to give in and go home . . ."

back which they call a horse—this is the simple impressionism which few of us recapture in later years.

It is tempting when people ask: How can I bring up my child to have good taste in the arts? to answer: Don't, they'll do it better themselves. But it's not quite as simple as that. Drawing, singing and reciting nursery rhymes are not the same things as looking at pictures, listening to music and reading literature. Children must absorb as well as create.

The secret of tempting children into the arts is locked inextricably with the general question of an understanding of children. This can be learned and must be studied by parents who want to make anything like a success of the job. The first step then is: Get to know the child.

Most young children take avariciously to new things and ideas. They study the details of pictures in books and magazines, absorb stories told and read to them with an insatiable appetite; they ask endless questions, most of the answers to which they promptly forget. In music they grow quickly to like nursery rhymes and tunes that incorporate familiar sounds, such as animal noises.

So far it is easy. But how many parents provide their children with a

thoughtful selection of material even at this stage? There are difficulties but where possible, even with a family living in overcrowded conditions, priority should be given to those children in the highly impressionable early years.

Let the child have his comics, favourite pictures books and fairy tales. But also see that something harder to grasp, something better than he has been used to, comes in with the rest.

If a child has the corner of a bookcase to himself he will regard it as a privilege to place a more grown-up book among the others. He will be curious to know what is in it. *Treasure Island* and Erich Kastner's *Emil and the Detectives* might seem old for boys of say four or five, but there is much they might grasp and lots more that they will unconsciously assimilate.

A little will go a long way at first. But listen to the child's play conversation, often the barometer of progress. If anything has stuck it will come out for exercise sooner or later. The foundation laid, the structure of growing appreciation will advance irrepressibly if material is fed with discretion.

Even at a very early age children will grow to like poetry if spoken with a certain emphasis and accompanied with a little explanation. Walter de la Mare

is a good start. His word pictures are winners with children and his illustrators—Emett, Marion Rivers-Moore, Harold Jones and others—seem to have been inspired by their task.

Nor is Shakespeare beyond a pre-school child although it is the sound that matters here more than the sense. Almost anyone, reading simply, can speak Shakespeare well enough to catch the ear of a fairly intelligent boy or girl of five. It is worth delving back to your own childhood to confirm that the respect which grows for things and people at this stage is hard to shatter at any time later in life.

Pictorial art as such means nothing to a young child. But the picture of a hare whether etched by Durer, drawn with feather strokes by a Chinese master or daubed by an American surrealist will give him joy—if he recognises it.

Parents do not always realise that a young child, taken to an art gallery for the first time, is also experiencing many other things for the first time during the excursion. His head, buzzing with impressions of the bus, the soldiers on horses, the hole in the road, may have no room left for mere pictures at the end of an eventful journey. It may be best to give in, go home and try the same trip again at a later date.

In the gallery the familiar objects will attract him—birds, dogs, horses, wind-mills, chairs and people doing the things he sees them do in life. That is in order. Let him become familiar with the way in which artists see these things and he will soon begin to think about them himself in a new way. He will learn to appreciate other people's viewpoint while choosing his own.

Take a look through children's work in collections such as *First Fruits* (Oxford University Press) or *Children as*

*Artists* (a half-crown King Penguin). The originality of approach in treatment and colour by children from five to early teens underlines the severe losses that can be sustained later if cultural as well as bodily needs are not catered for.

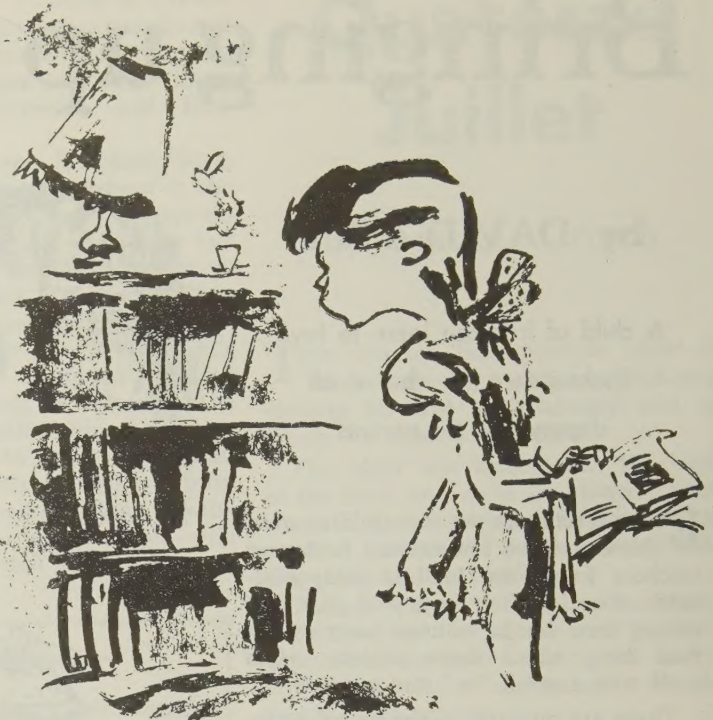
Nursery rhymes are a child's first selective experience of music. A mother's songs to her baby are more satisfying than Beethoven at any time later in life, but they give nevertheless only a hazy feeling of appetite appeased.

With the later nursery rhymes should go more substantial music introduced with such encouraging devices as those not scorned by Prokofiev who tells a story, introduces the various instruments and gives a delightful musical treat in *Peter and the Wolf*. Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra make a first-class job of their recording for H.M.V. with narrator Richard Hale's voice used like a solo instrument in a concerto. The importance of the tale-teller in the music of this piece was made clear when a well-known stage star over-acted the thing ruinously not long ago at the Albert Hall.

Not quite in the same class as *Peter and the Wolf* is *Sparkey's Magic Piano*. It lays on the moral a bit thick but introduces a fascinating sound trick which carries children entrancingly through the classical music. The B.B.C.'s Music and Movement radio programmes for schools are good for teaching relationship between music and action at a very early age.

There is no reason why young children should not grow to appreciate good music, if they are allowed to listen to it and are not dumped into it as if it were a bath. After all, they compose symphonies themselves at a very early age.

Listen to a child humming as he plays. He takes a simple theme, repeats it, trills a number of variations, mixes the whole lot into a jumble and then joy-



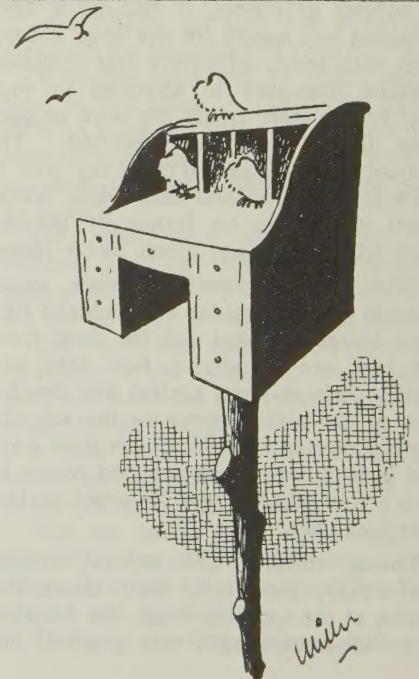
"A privilege to own a grown-up book . . ."

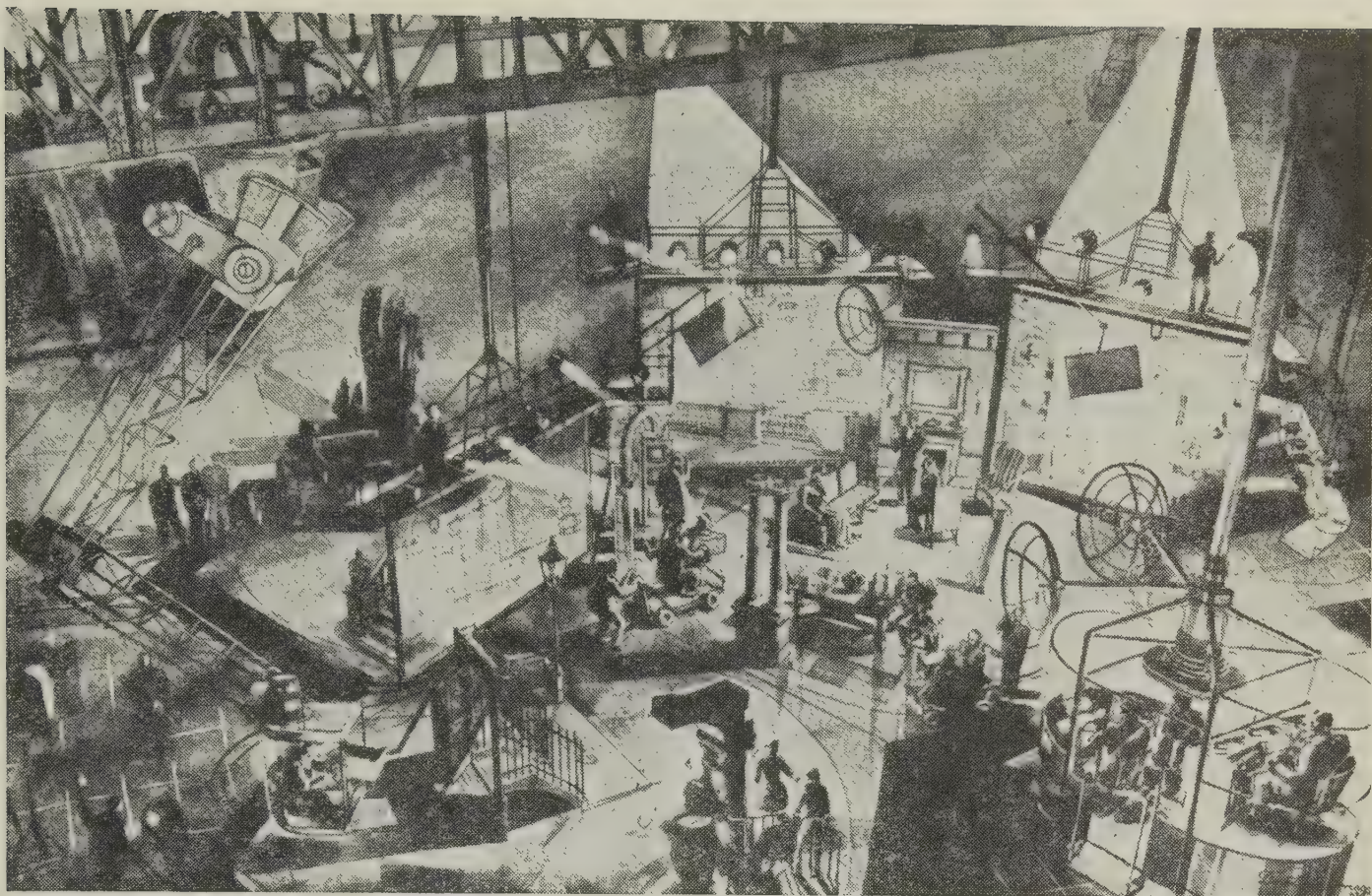
ously yells out the original theme to show he has not forgotten it. It is not a long step from that to appreciating somebody else's effort at the same sort of thing.

So when it comes to a question of taste, whatever the form of art, a child brought up to regard the arts as an explanation, reflection or an enhancement of a life he loves, will always know the value of the real thing. That, after all, is good taste.



"Take a simple theme and repeat . . ."





*David Rawnsley's impression of a television-film studio shows rotary stages, projection screens and director's control booth.*

## FILM MAKING IN THE FUTURE

Will Television kill the Cinema? Or is there room for both? OSWELL BLAKESTON thinks there is and forecasts a union bringing many mutual benefits.

WHEN it was announced that a film like *Bonnie Prince Charlie* cost about three quarters of a million pounds, even the least concerned knew that the film industry was due for an overhaul. Statisticians estimated that the muddle of film-making had reached such a density that a back-cloth out of position in the studio might account for £100 while it was being moved, and failure to deliver a costume at the right time might result in a loss of four or five hundred pounds.

One might say then that it was sound sense which drove the Independent Frame planners to conceive the stratagems I discussed in *The Frame And The Film* in last month's *OUR TIME*. But we must not make the mistake of classifying I.F. experts simply

as super-efficiency boys. They are men of vision. Patently, their first task has been to clear up chaos, but they have planned ahead of current achievement and offer a new film world of tomorrow.

Revolution comes with an understanding of the part electronics can play in the shape of things to come. It is unfortunate therefore, that the issue has been confused in public discussion. Certain publicists have found the headline "Film Versus Television" of news value; but this confuses the use of large television screens in cinemas (as a means of exhibiting entertainment) with the use of television equipment in film studios (as a means of recording entertainment).

Executives have paid attention primarily to the development of equipment for viewing and a great deal of

money has been spent on the project of large-screen television for theatres. It has been considerably harder for those with a balanced view of the future—such as the brilliant I.F. planner David Rawnsley—to interest authority in developing television equipment for film production. Yet this is infinitely more important than the theatre end of the business, for it may well guide principles in later evolution.

The linking of cinemas, with cables and transmitters, for large-screen television viewing is a costly undertaking; and the gain for the audience arises only in the simultaneous viewing of some topical event. There are, however, only a limited number of events with a wide audience appeal, and they usually take place at fixed times. Is the theatre

manager to suspend performance of the feature film to show the topical event; and if the event is of uncertain duration (say a boxing match), must he lose all control of his programme presentation? It seems an alarming complication when a few hours later other patrons will expect a film record of the event, as they have been given it in the past through the lightning record of news-cameramen.

Surely for all practical purposes the distribution of entertainment to big theatres by means of film remains the economical proposition. Film can be despatched with comparative ease to the remotest cinema where, as in every other theatre showing entertainment recorded on film, the programme can be controlled and balanced.

Such experts as Rawnsley see a future for smaller cinemas specialising in the television of topical events—intimate “telecineas” or “lookineas,” as Rawnsley calls them. But we have been considering the big cinema with large-screen television, when it is not a matter of concern to the audience whether the feature film is relayed by television or projected in the cinema.

On the other hand, the introduction of electronics into the making of pictures affords a further sweeping economy in the budgets of production and provides an aesthetic impetus to creative technicians.

You see, the film industry has been tolerating a raw-material wastage of 1,400 per cent. Feature film is budgeted for an exposure of about fourteen times as much film as is eventually used; and wastage of labour, time and money reach a proportionately fantastic level. A great deal of this loss is due to mechanics of the ciné camera. The director is often at the mercy of his cameraman, for only the cameraman knows what is really being recorded inside his magic box. When the director comes to see his “rushes” (the first prints of the scenes) he may find that his own conception of “the right take” is completely at variance with that of his cameraman. The scene has to be reshot.

Again, the cameraman himself may be at the mercy of assistants (the operator, the focus-puller, etc.), and miles of film and thousands of pounds can be wasted annually in errors of judgment and differences of opinion which are only revealed when the film is developed and printed.

So the men of vision who have conceived the I.F. system plan to abolish the motion-picture camera as we know it and substitute the television camera. Now the cameraman will no longer be a witch-doctor. The director will be

able to watch a television viewing screen and see the scene as the artists and camera move in it. The director can know exactly what he will be getting in and from the scene which, while he observes it, will be simultaneously transmitted to the laboratory where it is recorded on film under perfect gamma control.

The use of electronic scanning in film-making suggests borrowing what is profitable from television technique. With a combination of film and television technique certain sequences can be played in continuity and the director can view, edit and mix his images as they are transferred to the laboratory. So pre-planning and electronics can reduce the often unconscionable time which is at present spent in the cutting room.

The marriage of film and television is a happy one: electronics can bring to film ultimate economy and continuity in production, while film can add to television a new scope and fluidity. Of course executives must realise that it is not a question of film versus television, but of producers in the film industry and in television pooling their resources in order to set up a central production organisation. Then each film made on I.F. lines helps to build a library of material for back-projection, and this library can be drawn on by television producers and so solve the problem of how to find finance for a programme which may have but one performance.

From the audience angle, film and television are not finally in competition. Both have their appeals, graces and uses.

There are times when people need an “outing,” when a major part of the fun is to escape from the home; and there are types of show which cannot get across unless they are seen in a crowd and supported by audience reactions. There will always be a place for the public theatre; and there will be an increasingly appreciated place for the private show. Rawnsley, however, tells me that he feels home entertainment will be arranged in short items suitable for domestic intimacy—intervals for drinks, for visitors, for telephone calls, etc. The audience at home is vulnerable to interruptions, and equally feels the need for them. Here is another art to that of public performance.

The pity is that up to the present the two mediums have developed separately, and manufacturers of television apparatus have not realised until recently that there is an important market for electronics in tomorrow’s film studio. Necessary steps forward include the urgent one of perfecting the definition of television scanning so that it is as good as cine film.

Great progress is being made in France, where there is an alive awareness of the advantages of combining film and television mediums. While in England television is working on a definition of 405 lines and in the States on a definition of 615 lines, France has a definition of 819 lines. To approximate to film resolution the television definition should be 1,000 lines; and the French have proved there is no overwhelming difficulty in achieving this target.



ONE hundred years ago, Smith, Elder and Co. published another novel by Currer Bell. Its authoress, the little, unknown Charlotte Brontë, awaited the reception of *Shirley* with mixed feelings. Would any of the critics deal with her new novel as severely as they had dealt with *Jane Eyre*? One thing was certain: no one could accuse her of being melodramatic in *Shirley*, for the novel had been painstakingly written and the spirit of the Luddite riots had been recaptured by the help of old files of the *Mercury*.

As she busied herself about the parsonage, Charlotte must have reflected that she had to bear criticisms alone. No longer were Emily and Anne by her side to smile rather wearily as they had done when she had read the unfavourable criticisms of *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* in the *North American Review* prior to Emily's death. True, Ellen Nussey had been told the real identity of the Bells, but few others knew it.

*Shirley* was to give the game away. Phyllis Bentley has called it "the first Yorkshire regional novel" and the setting of the book was so vividly described that a Haworth man living in Liverpool knew at once it was someone near his native place who had written the novel. But who could it be? He could think of no one more likely than the parson's daughter Charlotte. Proud of his insight, he at once wrote to a Liverpool paper outlining his theory and the secret was out. Charlotte Brontë became known as the author of *Shirley* (published on October 26, 1849) and also of the famous *Jane Eyre*.

*Shirley* at once found favour with the people of the district. Charlotte herself observes that: "the Haworthians were making great fools of themselves about *Shirley*." They enjoyed picking out the real settings and the real people and it is related that Mr. Nicholls, the curate, and afterwards Charlotte's husband, much enjoyed the novel. His landlady "seriously thought he had gone wrong in his head as she heard him giving vent to roars of laughter and even clapping his hands and stamping the floor."

Mr. Nicholls makes a brief appearance at the end of the book as Mr. Malone's successor, but Charlotte let him off lightly. At first the three other curates, Mr. Smith, Mr. Grant and Mr. Bradley, were annoyed at being portrayed as Mr. Malone, Mr. Doone and Mr. Sweeting; but they soon grew accustomed to it and in time called each other by their fictitious names.

The other clerical characters of the book were also based on real people. The Rev. Matthewson Helstone was the

## Mr. Bell's last book



MARION TROUGHTON  
discusses a book of a hundred  
years ago which "gave the  
game away."

Rev. Hammond Roberson of Liversedge, who erected a fine Gothic church at his own expense. The Rev. Powley of Dewsbury was the original of the Rev. Dr. Boulty, while the Rev. Cyril Hall is based on either the younger or elder Rev. Heald of Birstall. But even Mr. Heald himself could not decide whether it was him or his father Charlotte had portrayed, for the Rev. Cyril Hall was a mixture of both.

The plot of *Shirley* is well-known and needs no repeating. It is connected with two love affairs and the setting is the Yorkshire of 1812 at the time of the breaking of the machinery. One of the first and most notable Luddite riots furnished Charlotte with material for her chapter: *A Summer's Evening*, when a riot took place at Robert Moore's mill. In the novel she calls the mill, "Hallow's Mill" and sets it in the *Hallow*. In reality it is Hunsworth Wood that she describes and the place where the riots of 1812 took place is a mile or two away at Rawfold's Mill.

Mr. Cartwright, the owner of Rawfold's Mill, was one of the first Yorkshire

manufacturers to introduce machinery into his factory. Mrs. Gaskell calls Cartwright "a remarkable man." He was well-educated and could speak fluent French, having lived on the Continent for a considerable time. He was very unpopular and turned his mill into a fortress as he knew the work-people were intent on destroying the machinery they believed was taking away their livelihood. On Saturday, April 11, 1812, the rioters attacked the mill after meeting between Kirkleer and Liversedge. After a sharp fight they were beaten and driven off despite their threat to kill Cartwright's wife and children unless he allowed them to destroy the machinery.

Charlotte Brontë had begun to write *Shirley* before the deaths of Branwell, Emily and Anne; but having completed about two-thirds of it she had to leave it while she attended to their needs. This interruption is apparent to the alert reader for parts of the book do not grip the constant attention as *Jane Eyre* does. The novel was finished after Anne's death and Charlotte says that the last volume "was composed in the eager restless endeavour to combat mental sufferings that were scarcely tolerable."

At one time Charlotte thought of calling her novel *Hallow's Mill*; then she was undecided between *Fieldhead* and *Shirley* but eventually she chose the latter title. The heroine, Shirley Keeldar, who has many attributes of Emily Brontë, comes to the district of Briarfield (Birstall) to live in her home "Fieldhead." In reality the house described is Oakwell Hall at Birstall. *Shirley* becomes very friendly with the Rector's niece, Caroline Helstone, whose character is said to have been based on Ellen Nussey.

Both *Shirley* and Caroline come into close contact with the Yorke family who are almost completely reproduced from the Taylors, friends of Charlotte Brontë who lived at the Red House at Gomersall, though Charlotte chose "Brian Mains" as the name of the Yorkes' house.

Yorkshire people of all classes are portrayed faithfully in *Shirley*; their sturdy independence is shown as well as their faults in such characters as Joe Scott, the overlooker, and Sarah Hortense, Moore's maid who scorns foreign cooking and will not wear a cap. The Whitsuntide events form an interesting account of what used to be one of the most anticipated treats of the year in Yorkshire.

# Gallery for New Artists of Our Time

## FIVE PICTURES

by

STANLEY HOUGHTON

THESE paintings and drawings by Stanley Houghton are the first of a series *Our Time* will present in the belief that there are many artists of great merit whose work is being kept away from the public because they do not belong to one or other of the select cliques of artists living in Hampstead or Chelsea.

Houghton, who shuns London's art colonies (he lives at Hounslow), is a twin. Apart from their looks and the fact that both are artists he and his brother are almost opposites. Their work is as different as it could possibly be.

Fourteen years ago when the Oil Portrait reproduced here was first painted the artist was a scene painter. He is still a scene painter and, apart from a few war years in the Army, has been all the time.

But to look back at his work over those years is to witness a multitude of emotional experiences not suggested by a catalogue of the artist's itinerary from studio to studio or even round North Africa and Italy.

There were times, as in "The Family" and the Oil Portrait 1935, when his work was frankly derivative. But not for long. Always he has been searching for a universal style in which to express himself. Always he has found a new style to meet each new problem.

This may not be a good thing. Most artists at thirty-six have slipped into a style which can answer all the questions they put to themselves. But the questions an artist puts to himself matter more than the answers he gives.

Unfortunately he is very difficult to please and so after more than twenty years few of his pictures remain.

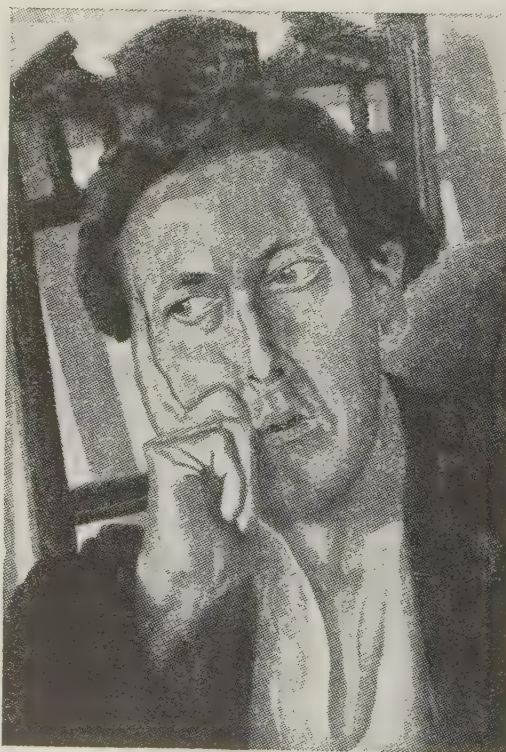
Nevertheless, it is largely his own fault that he has had little recognition either as painter or illustrator. Some of his drawings have been published—*Our Time* reproduced some a few years ago and during the war the War Artists' Advisory Committee purchased a group of his Italian drawings. But Houghton finds it hard to force his work on to a reluctant public.

Unfortunately our society is like that. Success does not come to the artist any more, he has to run after it.



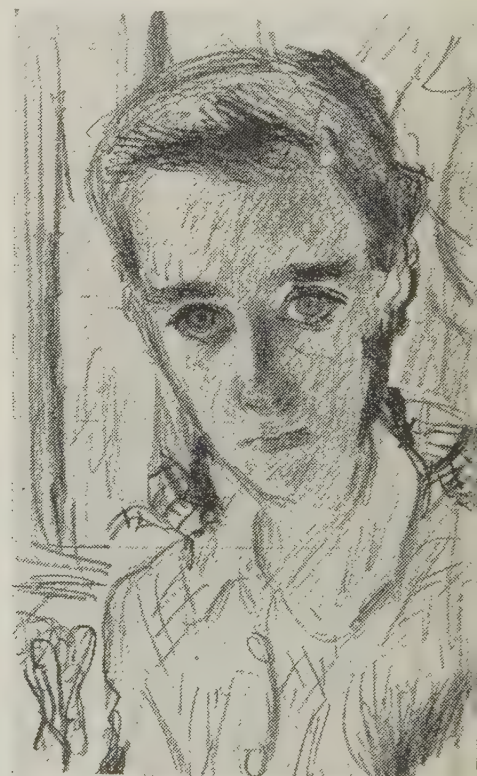
Pen and wash drawing

*The Family 1935*



Oil

*Portrait 1935*



Chalk drawing

*Judith*



Ink and chalk drawing

*Italy 1943*



Pencil drawing

*Nude 1949*

# Cocktail Bar

Short Story by

NORAH HOULT



*She usually stared at people without smiling.*

EVERYBODY liked Gus Simons who was an Irish Jew looking a good deal younger than his years. Now being a Jew is just the same as being anybody else except that because your race has been pushed around from pillar to post rather more than other people, you come to believe that security is the most precious possession of all. And if you are fairly simple, as most of us are fairly simple, you think that security means first of all money; and then just to show you have money, plenty of furs and jewellery and smart clothes for your women; and you always take a taxi even when it is as quick to walk because that proves that half-a-crown here and there means nothing to you. But you are also very sorry for poor people and very generous towards them.

And being reared in Ireland just before the first world war is just the same as being reared anywhere else except that you have memories of walking along white roads twisting by purple mountains, and little children saying "Hello" as they slip by, and ending up in a friendly bar where stories are told and maybe a song or two sung. There is a neighbourliness there that the big cities never give you back again.

So because of the many little different twists of our lives and of our forbears' lives, each of us is a trifle different from the next man. So, of course, if another man had walked into that Mayfair cocktail bar late one winter afternoon, he wouldn't have had the identical feelings Gus Simons had. It is Gus Simons's feelings I am going to try and tell you about.

It was one of the usual London after-the-war winter evenings, which meant fog and a creeping chill and an acceptance that all gaiety and all smartness had been blitzed out of the West End. But as soon as Gus opened the door of the little bar he felt that one pocket of warmth had been salvaged. It tinkled out in the high-pitched "Darlings" and

"My dears" of the women; it asserted itself in the sight of the real silk stockings on their legs; it was heard in the talkativeness punctuated by laughter of the men standing at ease; and it most certainly glittered from the goodly array of bottles shining out from the shelves behind the bar.

And the two women who waved and beckoned to him were each smart in their different ways. Their faces, their eyelashes and eyebrows were done up in a more or less similar fashion, but Molly, who he had really come to meet, had a soft, round, pink face that was generally smiling, and Vera was taller and thinner and darker with upswept hair, and she usually stared at people without smiling. However the real point to Gus was that when he sat between them round a corner of the bar they looked nice and smelt nice and were very glad to see him. He ordered a double whisky from Laurie Burke behind the counter right away because he could see that he had a good deal of leeway to make up. They must have been sitting there a good while, for already Molly seemed under the influence. And very nice, too.

While he got along with his drinking and after he'd said the usual complimentary things, he didn't talk much, but let them talk. He just let himself sink into the warm feelings the whisky and sitting between two dolled-up, expensive women gave him. He also had a word

or two with Laurie who had a pleasant, plump face but who, he thought, looked a deal older and more careworn than when he'd seen her last. But, of course, that was a good while back.

Then Molly started talking in a lower, more serious voice.

"I want to ask your advice, Gus darling," she said. "It's about money. I don't think Eddie gives me enough."

"What does he give you?"

She said right into his ear so that her warm breath tickled: "Five thousand."

"Five thousand a year?"

She nodded.

And five thousand, he thought impartially, as the door behind opened letting in a draught of cold air, was still a whale of a lot of money. There were people down his way, all over the world for that matter, who would think that if they had five hundred a year the sun had come into the sky and would always shine.

But that wasn't the point. The point was that Eddie was a blasted millionaire, and since he'd been fool enough to separate from a woman as smart and nice as Molly, he should certainly give her more.

"No, it isn't enough. Not for Eddie, it isn't enough."

Molly nodded. "That's what I think. Honest, the way things are now, it goes nowhere."

All the same, he thought, darting a side look at her, those pearls you are

wearing cost Eddie a pretty tidy sum. So did the fur coat dangling over the back of your chair. You haven't done too badly out of old Ed.

"And when Peter finishes at his prep and goes to Winchester it won't be nearly enough."

"So you've got him down for Winchester."

"Yes, I told you."

The boys down his way had to leave school at fifteen. But that wasn't the point.

"Eddie'll meet you. After all, Eddie's not so bad. Eddie'll fork out."

"He'll bloody well have to," said Molly. And she sunk her chin in her hand, and looked at the bottle, and looked towards Laurie.

And now that their glasses were filled again he had to give some attention to the other girl.

So he said: "Well, Vera, my girl, how are things?"

He said the words in an intimate tone because that would show Vera that he was asking about her relations with her lover. He remembered enough from her confidences last time he met her to have retained that all was not as smooth as it should be. Anyhow it was always safe to assume that something was wrong: certainly such had been the case in all the amorous confidences he had received from women.

Vera dropped her eyelids, gazed down at her curved hand and mauve fingernails and drawled, "Well, not terribly integrated."

"Ah," said Gus sympathetically, waiting for her eyes to lift to his while he remembered that Vera was a bit of a highbrow. Molly had said about her before his first meeting, "At least Vera can talk about Things. She does read Books which my swine of a husband never did. Because he couldn't understand them if he did read them, that's why."

\* \* \*

All the same, at that moment Gus felt he didn't want to talk about Things, not at that moment with the whisky just beginning to take effect and make him look forward to the next one. So he wasn't really sorry to avert his eyes from Vera, who was just starting to speak when Molly on his other side said, "He pretends to love his children. So then he oughta be glad and want to do what he can for them. That's what I figure love is. Love is . . ." she paused and put her hand to her mouth to cover a slight hiccup, ". . . love is giving. It's not getting."

"That's right, Molly," said Gus. And Vera chipped in with, "You don't need

to tell us. Tell the other guys. I know what love means. But do they? I mean it can't be ALL on one side."

Molly said across to her, "I'm not talking about what you're talking about."

She said it rather sharply so that Gus was surprised, because it wasn't Molly's usual line talking sharply. But he wanted another drink and so did the girls; and Molly insisted on paying, and he let her, for she had more money than he had. Then they talked to Laurie awhile and Laurie told them the prices she had to give for liquor these days were no joke, since her quota was so small as the bar had started after the war. And when Laurie went off to serve, Vera started to tell him how she knew someone who knew someone who figured in a sensational murder case then being reported.

\* \* \*

Gus listened attentively for it was quite interesting, though Molly didn't seem so interested; so presumably she had heard it all before. But when they were drinking their next round she said suddenly, leaning a little forward, "Listen, Vera! I want to tell you something. I've wanted to tell you something for a long time."

"What?" said Vera.

And Molly said, "I think you're a bit of a bitch," and then nodded to herself with satisfaction.

Gus was surprised to hear Molly say this, for what he had always thought about Molly was that she was a grand person who never said unkind things to anybody or about them. And he looked under his eyelids at Vera wondering if she'd snap out, and he'd have to pour oil on troubled waters. But Vera's face underneath her funny little upturned hat was solemnly inquiring, or perhaps stupefiedly inquiring. And she only said, "How do you mean?"

"That's what I mean," said Molly, taking up her glass.

"But," said Gus, thinking that this was beginning to be interesting, and that they could all talk it out in a friendly fashion, "What do you mean, Molly, saying that Vera is a bit of a bitch?"

Before Molly said anything, Vera, who had been cogitating, leaned forward and said, "Do you mean, my pet, that I'm a bitch because I take other women's guys away from them?"

Gus watched Molly draw on her cigarette and try to think that one out. Then she said, "No, Vera. I don't mean you're a bitch because you take other women's guys away from them." She shook her head, and then aware that they were still hanging on her words made an effort and said, "I mean women

are always doing that to other women. Right through the world it's going on. They can't all be bitches."

"I wouldn't say they are all bitches. No, not ALL," agreed Gus, and Molly, putting down her glass, said in a half-peevish, half-maudlin voice, "But it's all very sad all the same."

"Don't let's get off the point," said Vera in a harder voice. "Molly says I'm a bitch. But she won't say how I'm a bitch."

"Yes, Molly, you should tell her why you think she's a bitch," said Gus earnestly.

"I don't think I said bitch," said Molly. "I think what I said was a bit of a bitch."

"Well, bit of a bitch then," said Vera.

"Yes, that's what I think," said Molly. Looking at her glass she also looked down the years. "Almost ever since I've known you, though I liked you, I thought you were a bit of a bitch."

"Don't go on saying it," said Vera on a higher note. "Tell us why. Just tell us WHY."

Molly stared across at her for a moment. Then she put her coat round her shoulders, and slipped off the stool. "I gotta go to the toilet."

"I'll come, too," said Vera.

"That's right," said Gus. "Both of you go." He spread a benevolent hand towards them as they turned away. They could have it out between themselves, he thought. And now that he was alone the voices of the other people in the bar came to his ears. He heard a man behind him saying, "I must get John to paint him. John would do a marvellous job with him."

\* \* \*

He must mean Augustus John, Gus thought. He turned to glance at the group. All well-fed and very much at home, and one had a fur collar to his overcoat. The accents of the governing class but of course moving gracefully in the upper reaches of Art as well. And suddenly a hollow feeling came into his being, so that he felt lonely and apart and intensely critical of all the well-dressed, chattering, half-drunken people around him. Bitches and bastards, he thought. Because all this while other people are starving and are very, very cold. He looked for Laurie in order to push his glass over towards her, but she was talking to some woman and while he stared at her he noticed that her full face was getting puffy around the jaw. A decent Irishwoman, he thought, and what a life for her waiting on all these bastards, pouring out gins and lime, pouring Martinis, under the concealed electric light gadgets; pouring

out her life drop by drop for as old Omar said: whether at Naishapur or Babylon the wine of life is pouring drop by drop, the leaves of life are falling one by one.

She caught his fixed gaze and came over, and when she was measuring the whisky he said urgently, "Laurie, I want to ask you something."

"What's that?"

"Listen to what I'm saying. Wouldn't you be better keeping a little sweet-shop back home where you came from, maybe in a village, than running this joint?"

\* \* \*

Laurie looked at him hard as she put the glass down. Of course he was drunk. But was he getting at her because he might know that her father kept a pork butcher's shop at home.

"No, I wouldn't," she said. "That's four-and-six."

"But, Laurie," he said, fumbling in his pocket, and drawing out a handful of coins, "wouldn't you really rather be putting sweets in a little paper bag, and giving them to the little children coming to spend their Saturday pennies with you?"

"No, I would not," said Laurie firmly, and she said it with a glint in her eyes as she looked back on the long, hard way she'd come up since she'd stood behind the counter of her father's shop.

"But, my girl, you can't really like this sort of thing. . . . I mean it would be different if you were in a public house, drawing beer for decent, working people. That would be another thing."

"Yes, it would be. Quite another thing," said Laurie, and she gave Gus such a glare that Molly, who had come up in front of Vera, caught the look and cried out in surprise, "Why, Laurie, you're not cross with Gus! You couldn't be cross with Gus. He's a darling." And she put her arm protectively around his shoulders and gave him a soft, wet kiss.

"No. Laurie, you can't be cross with me," said Gus, surprised to find that apparently Laurie was cross. And Vera, suddenly appearing, said, "Now what's the matter?" And as no one replied, "Are you staying for another drink, Molly? Or are you going on like you said?"

Molly blinked and shook her head and then said, "Yes, I've got to go. I just remembered that I said I'd be at the Dorchester at six, and it's nearly seven, and the party'll be over, and I hope I'm not too drunk, but I mus' go. Darling Gus, can you get a taxi?"

"All right," said Gus, getting heavily off his stool, "I'll see." He went out

of the mews and into the cold street and stood waiting while all sorts of cars went swiftly by; and he stared at head lights and rear lights and at the pinched face of a cripple selling newspapers. He bought a paper, gave him sixpence and told him to keep the change; and then went back to the bar and said, "It's impossible. None of the bloody cars want anybody to get into them."

"Ring up," said Vera. "That's the best thing to do. Laurie has a number."

Next thing he was in a telephone box, dialling very carefully and very slowly. It took him a little time, but at last he did get the number and a voice said a car would be around right away. When he went back there was a drink waiting for him, and Molly said, "Gus, are you miserable? You look so sad."

He was sad, and he tried to remember why. At last he said: "It's people living the wrong way. Why doesn't Laurie . . . ?" And he shook his head.

"Why won't Laurie what?" asked Vera. When he didn't reply a gleam came into her eyes and she said, "Tell me. Were you making up to Laurie while we were powdering?"

He stared at her uncomprehendingly. He had just fathomed what she meant and it seemed to be also the answer to another question that had not been answered, when there was a sort of commotion and then he heard Molly say, "Hi, you two. My taxi's come. Are you coming with me, or staying on?"

"I'm coming with you," he said firmly, for Molly could give him a lift and then he'd go home by bus or tube or something. That was what he wanted to do, go home and tell someone who understood that it was an immense pity about the world.

\* \* \*

In no time Molly was getting out and kissing him good-bye, and telling him to be sure and see Vera home. He didn't want to see Vera home, and there seemed to be no reason why he should as Regent's Park was all out of his way, but then that was the trouble with going out with posh women who expected all this sort of nonsense. And Vera had given her address to the driver.

Now the two of them were alone so he did the expected thing and put his arm round her shoulders, but when she nestled up he remembered something he had forgotten and asked, "Did Molly tell you?"

"Tell me what?"

"Tell you why she thought you a bit of a bitch?"

"No," said Vera. "No, she never told me."

"Well, then, Vera, you ought to know. Are you a bit of a bitch?"

"Why?"

"I don't know. It's you that must know. Can't you see that you are the only person who knows the answer to that question?"

And Vera thought, or pretended to think, and then she said, "Maybe I am, but it doesn't matter, does it?" And he said, "No, it doesn't matter," but after he had kissed her he thought again and said, "But perhaps it does matter, Vera."

"Well then, I'm not," said Vera.

But was that the truth, Gus wondered, because she had said before . . . but it seemed that the subject would never be cleared up and would take its place among all the thousand and one unsolved problems in every life, because the cab stopped and though Vera asked him if he would come in and have a drink he said, "No, I'm sorry, I can't." "Good-night, then," said Vera and disappeared, and probably she was annoyed with him, but he just wasn't in the mood even if she was and his mind quickly jumped away to the taxi-man who said, setting him down at the entrance to the tube, "That'll be fifteen shillings."

"How do you make that out?" he asked, for the man must think he was drunk.

"Well, I had to come all the way to the club, and then I was kept waiting. I have to count that in."

"No, you were not kept waiting, and you are overcharging. But here you are then."

And, counting carefully, he gave him the exact money and no tip and Gus heard him mutter something and bang the door as he drove away.

Another bastard, he thought, as he walked down the steps of the tube. Of course he probably thought that people he picked up at cocktail bars were fair game, and so most of them might be; but he wasn't because he wasn't a fool.

And Molly was all right really though she was drinking too much, but probably Vera was a bit of a bitch. Yet Laurie would rather be giving drinks to that kind of person than putting sweets in paper bags for little children! Many things had gone wrong in the world, and it wasn't only the war that was responsible.

\* \* \*

The man opposite him in the tube wondered as he looked across at him once why the good-looking Jew was shaking his head. He must be drunk, he thought.

And so he was.

# Can puppets grow up?

by JOHN WRIGHT

Are the little people worked by strings condemned to be just a novelty? Or can they contribute to serious art? Only the men and women who pull the strings can decide.

**S**MALL things have an inexplicable fascination. The doll's house, the model railway, the flea circus and the Lord's Prayer inscribed on a grain of rice are a few things that come to mind. And then, of course, there is the puppet theatre. Would marionettes continue to charm if they were life-size? I doubt it. They would be macabre and no longer lovable.

A friend of mine once had a very small dog which was a great success. As a dog it was far from perfect and in fact was rather hideous; yet when it went strutting down the street it was fairly mobbed by admirers who would probably have let a thoroughbred of normal size go unnoticed. I mention this because it is as good an introduction as any to an aspect of puppetry which provides at one and the same time a great asset and an even greater pitfall. For it is obvious to anyone who takes any interest in the matter that far too many puppeteers are exploiting the novelty and fascination of this form of miniature theatre without being entertainers or artists in the true sense of the word.

It is true that in England the art of the puppet theatre is not very well established. There are, according to the British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild, not more than forty-five companies operating and many of them are only semi-professional or part-time entertainers. But there is every sign that, with the film world slumping and the production costs of the legitimate theatre soaring dizzily, the puppet theatre by reason of its reasonable running expenses, may come into favour and make great strides in the near future. Much will depend on the puppeteers themselves, however, because something much more

than sound economics is needed.

The spectacular rise of British ballet in the last fifteen years shows what can be done by the proper handling of the revival and modernisation of an old traditional art. The ballet companies will certainly suffer when balletomanes get tired of screaming approval of performances, whether good, bad or indifferent, but meanwhile the sincere and strenuous efforts of those who started the movement here have brought a wonderful reward.

People with talent and imagination have built up an entertainment force which is a credit to our country—Rambert with her fiery soul-searing criticism; De Valois with her cool organising talent and Haskell with his keen journalistic wisdom. The best artistic, musical and dancing talent have been enlisted and trained with courage and foresight and now British ballet has reached the top.

Can puppets do the same in the next fifteen years? Not if they depend entirely on novelty and sentiment for their appeal.

I shudder to think of the thousands of good potential audiences who are drawn to see a puppet show merely by childhood memories of "weird little wooden actors worked invisibly by strings." What do they see? In nine cases out of ten, a drab set-up with gawky, ugly



*John Wright's Kaspar thinks it over . . .*

marionettes wobbling and swaying or treading wildly in mid-air to the tune of a wheezy gramophone with which they cannot keep time; or jolting and jibbering to the badly spoken dialogue of a plotless home-made play. By the end of the performance the novelty has gone, and curiosity is satisfied. They may have enjoyed the strange spectacle, but will they come to another show? No. It is like going to see the waxworks, or taking a joy ride in an aeroplane; you have done it once and that is enough. Such harmless pleasures provide little more than novelty or nervous thrill but the puppet theatre, in order to survive, must give more, much more, than these.

Let me analyse puppet possibilities and compare them with the ingredients that go to make other forms of entertainment a lasting success. Recently a famous continental company, which ought to have known better, gave us a "tribute to Pavlova." As an opening to this item they exploited a good trick. In the midst of a well designed and beautifully

lit set, a small ballerina puppet posed for a moment in a graceful arabesque and floated away into the wings. Then appeared another ballerina, very much larger in size and by contrast a monster (though she was actually only two feet high). To the haunting strains of Saint Saens's *The Swan*, this apparently huge creature rendered a dance which once brought world fame to a great ballerina. Every movement was imitated by every device possible to puppetry but where the limbs should have moved in soft undulating rhythm the action was only too obviously wooden and the result was a travesty. Judging from the applause many were intrigued by this wooden Pavlova, but the effect for me was disastrous.

If all that puppeteers can do is to imitate the highly specialised complex and emotional actions of human entertainers then they have no future. Fortunately they can do much more, as the same company proved in another programme with a most satisfying rendering of *Faust*. Some of the good Doctor's speeches were a little long-winded for his rather limited gestures, but some well designed Devils, and a character who introduced himself as Jack Pudding, showed how really enchanting puppets can be. Jack Pudding particularly struck me as being a real puppet actor; he walked as a puppet should walk (how many puppets can walk at all?), slid down steps and rode through the air with a style all his own. With good settings and masterful lighting we saw some moments of successful puppetry exploited to the full.

Professor Skupa, from Prague, last year gave us an even greater treat although his methods, based on restraint, perfect timing and a fine sense of humour and put across with the most beautiful set of figures imaginable, served to stress the limitations of the craft rather than its possibilities.

Skupa and Aicher are among those who have carried on the tradition of the puppet theatre as an acceptable and recognised form of entertainment on the continent. I wish a similar result had been obtained for British puppetry. The

possibilities are there, but where is the criticism which will lift it out of the slough of third-rate gadgeteering; where is the courage and foresight that will enlist capital and talent, and where is the literary flare which will give the glamour and glow that will bring in the public? We do not ask for cheering puppetomanes; we just want good, discerning audiences who will come and come again.

Even these things are not enough. Criticism will fall on barren ground if there is no talent to react, and traces of talent among British puppeteers are painfully hard to find. How many of us have learned to draw, design, model or carve? Having made our dreary little figures, do we learn to use them? Do we study voice production, the art of acting, stage design or lighting? All too often the answer is: No.

For the most part we lack taste, craftsmanship and theatre sense. Above all we lack capital; in the struggle to make ends meet and at the same time buy a few lights and some scene paint the fine ideals we started with have died colourlessly.



... and sadly decides he is no Romeo

But this need not be so—if we banish sentiment and substitute honest criticism and regard puppetry as a high art with fine aesthetic possibilities to be studied and cherished. We can establish this most exacting profession by enlisting good craftsmen and good theatrical talent. Capital can be found too, if we show courage and the power to use our resources wisely. Then the public will respond. Come slump or boom, if there is something really good to be seen the theatre doors will swing and the programmes will fan and flutter. No power on earth will stop them.

## Light on America

Two men entered my life recently. The one nodded grimly and the other grinned with shy understanding, but they both unceremoniously took possession.

They stepped out of books by two young American novelists—Howard Fast, 33, deep-feeling and with uncompromising faith in the common people; and Albert Maltz, vigorous, humane and humorous.

Howard Fast in *The American* tells the story of John Peter Altgeld who left his father's mortgaged home to be a soldier in the civil war. He became a lawyer and later governor of his state. His life journey takes him through vast plains of inertia and prejudice, great mountain ranges of struggle for justice.

Albert Maltz's mountain in *The Journey of Simon McKeever* is the sort he makes with glorious abandon and rich humour out of the molehill of an old oilworker's arthritis-maimed legs.

These books are too different, and they came together too accidentally, for their essential similarity to be missed.

Simon McKeever, the oilworker, starts in old age on a journey to find a cure for his incurable disability. He travels across a continent with the confidence of a young man, hitch-hiking, philosophising, sometimes edging in a crab-like, tortoise-paced shuffle, but always moving towards his goal.

Altgeld blunders from early years through a world of bitterness and uncertainty, bludgeoned, starved and harangued into malleability until he assumes the shape and stature of an acclaimed hero.

He achieved his greatness the hard way. Simon McKeever had greatness thrust upon him and only a limited few—the reader is among the fortunates—realise he had it.

So here are two great Americans having in common—character. Indomitable, forthright, essentially honest, they could have been great friends in the same novel: John Peter Altgeld, vigorous talker, sullen but patient listener, who left a hated home as a boy to march with soldiers, would have lent a willing ear to the story of the old boy Simon McKeever who began his journey from a home for the aged which gave him succour and denied him life.

Messrs. Fast and Maltz have let some light in on America.

D.C.G.

THE salesman got out of his car and crossed the building site, passed the concrete mixer and a heap of sand, until he reached the foreman's office. He knocked and walked in. A burly man with a red face and loose eyes pivoted on a high stool to meet his look of enquiry.

The salesman grinned and extended his hand. "Morning," he said. "Foreman?"

The burly man nodded, slid off the stool and doubtfully shook hands. "Yes," he said. "Can't say that I know you."

"Oh, the old firm," smiled the salesman. "Catchem Publishing Company." He rested his case on the sloping desk, very much at ease, and took out a packet of cigarettes. "Smoke?"

"Thanks," said the foreman. "Catchem, eh? Haven't seen you blokes around for ages." He put his cigarette in the match flame and his cheeks hollowed.

"We don't get about so much these days," said the salesman. "Paper for one thing. Not enough of it. Editions are shorter and soon sell out." He leaned against the desk and let the smoke come out of his nostrils as though he were playing trains. "As a matter of fact, I was at one of your other jobs yesterday." He frowned. "Where was it now? . . . other side of town somewhere. . . ." He looked at the nudes pinned to the wall, brow furrowed and waiting.

"Factory job in Lissman-st.?" suggested the foreman. "Hewitt and Archer's?"

"That's it," said the salesman. "Hewitt and Archer's. The foreman there told me to call at this job. What's his name now?"

"Bill Fletcher," said the foreman.

"That's it," smiled the salesman. "Bill Fletcher. Nice chap, too. I got a tidy few orders there."

The foreman fingered his chin. "What you carryin'?"

"As a matter of fact," said the salesman, "we've only got two sets in print at the moment. Three volumes on bricklaying and a four-volume edition of building construction with a pocket book. Both new and bang up-to-date. Delivery's the snag. Orders are piling up and we can't get 'em out quick enough." He glanced out of the window. "Smallish job, this. Many men here?"

"Couple o' carpenters and a brickie," said the foreman. "Don't think you'll do much good. Not the type of blokes who want books on the trade. Dirty photographs more in their line."

"Like that, eh?" said the salesman. "Well, you never can tell. I get orders

# THE SALESMAN

by GEORGE EVEREST



from the most unlike'y people sometimes. Mind you, now we've got this advanced building construction in print, we've got something to sell to the chaps at the top of the tree. Builders, foremen, clerks of works. No elementary stuff in it, but a first-rate reference work for the man in charge. Comprehensive too, covers everything."

He picked up his case. "All right to go round and see the men?"

"Sure," said the foreman. As the salesman opened the door, he said: "Let's have a look at that set you're talkin' about."

The salesman, who had been very slow in opening the door, said: "Yes, certainly."

He snapped open his case and showed the foreman the sample, told him about the binding, the number of pages and illustrations. While the foreman was looking at it, he said casually: "We do terrific business with that. Not that we get many cash orders. But where a man won't whip out five pounds in a lump, he doesn't mind paying ten bob a month. Half-a-crown a week, that's all. He doesn't miss it. Mind, you've got to wait for them. Four weeks delivery."

"Looks pretty good," said the foreman. "Ten bob a month, eh?"

The salesman yawned. "It's worth while," he said. "You can never stop learning, I suppose. A man like yourself now—it isn't that you don't know the job, because you wouldn't be where you are. But you've got such a lot to keep check on, you can't store it all in your head. And that set really is a fine reference work."

"H'm," said the foreman. The salesman looked out of the window as though it was a matter of no consequence. "All right, you can stick me down for a set. Might come in handy some time."

"Oh, it's good stuff," said the salesman. "No use for young chaps, of course. Too advanced for them." He produced a pink form. "Just sign here and put your address down."

The foreman started to write. "Any deposit?"

The salesman shrugged his shoulders. "Please yourself," he said. "We don't mind."

"Oh, well," said the foreman. "In that case—"

"Of course," said the salesman, "deposit orders are dealt with first. Only

natural. Might knock a couple of weeks off delivery."

"H'm," said the foreman and took out a greasy wallet. "Quid do?"

"Certainly." The salesman took the pound note and scribbled a receipt. "See the other chaps now, then. Give you a look in some other time if I can." He returned the sample to his case.

"Sure," said the foreman. And then: "Don't let on to the blokes that I've ordered a set. Might not look too good."

"Of course not," said the salesman.

\* \* \*

Outside, he looked around the job. A pair of houses were going up, shells completed. He walked across the dried mud and entered the first house. A carpenter was working on a bench, back towards him.

"Morning," said the salesman briskly.

The carpenter straightened up and turned around and the salesman's eyes flickered. "Ah," he said. "It must be the other carpenter I'm looking for."

The carpenter laid down his saw and stared at him. He was an old man with a surly face. "What other carpenter?" he said.

"The younger chap," smiled the salesman. "Foreman told me to see him. At least, I suppose it was the foreman. In the office there. Red-faced chap."

"George," said the carpenter. "He's foreman all right. God knows why." He stared suspiciously at the salesman. "What do you want, anyway?"

"Oh, no interest to you," said the salesman. "You've gone past the book stage at your time of life."

The carpenter scowled. "Books, eh? What, Catchem?"

"That's right," grinned the salesman. "The old firm."

The carpenter spat on the floor. "Biggest lot o' twisters in the business," he said. "I 'ad some once when I was apprenticed. Tried to do me."

"Before my time," said the salesman. "You can't blame me."

"Well, the books are no good, anyway. Never 'ave bin an' never will be. Wouldn't look at 'em if you gave 'em to me."

"Oh, I don't know," protested the salesman. "What's one man's meat is another man's poison. It's all a matter of opinion."

The carpenter picked up his saw. "Bet you don't sell many."

"You'd be surprised," said the salesman. "As a matter of fact, the foreman's just ordered a set."

The carpenter grimaced expressively. "He can do with some books," he said.

"Where's the other chippie?" asked the salesman.

The carpenter had resumed work.

"Upstairs," he growled.

"On his own?"

"Yes."

"What's his name?"

"Bennet. Frank Bennet."

"Thanks," said the salesman and went up the stairs, whistling.

Round the landing, a young man was hanging a door.

"Hullo," grinned the salesman and looked first in one empty room, then in another. When he came back, he said: "I'm looking for a carpenter, name of Frank Bennet."

"That's me," said the young man and ran his fingers through a mop of blond hair.

"Of course," said the salesman, smiling. "It must be you. There's nobody else up here." He put down his case and examined the room professionally. "Not bad, eh?"

The young man waited for him to finish his inspection.

The salesman walked slowly around, opening doors and trying the window. Then he said: "Well, now, George sent me up to see you. Haven't met you before, have I?"

"No."

"I can't always remember," said the salesman. "I get about so much. Especially among your firm, from one job to the other. Mind you, I know most of your chaps. George, of course, is a friend of mine in a manner of speaking. Know him very well. Most of your foremen, as a matter of fact. Bill Fletcher's another pal of mine. Know Bill?"

"No," said the young man. "Can't say I do."

"Doing the Hewitt and Archer factory in Lissman-st. Pretty sticky job, too. I've just come from there." He took out his cigarettes. "Smoke?"

"Thanks," said the young man.

As the salesman struck a match, he said: "Catchem, I'm from. Know us?"

"Catchem?" The young man shook his head. "Can't say I do."

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The salesman threw the match on the floor and said: "Publishers to the building trade. We print books for all tradesmen; chippies, brickies, plumbers, painters, everybody. Not doing much now because of the paper shortage, but we've just had a new set come off the press for carpenters. I showed it to George and he said you were the keenest of the gang and likely to be interested. Got any books?"

"No," said the young man.

The salesman opened his case. "Well, look," he said. "This is it. Four volumes on building construction. We sell it to all tradesmen, really, but carpenters are more intelligent as a rule and more book-minded, so they nearly always take it." He rifled through the pages while the young man watched. "It does a bit of all trades but concentrates on the chippie. What's more, with this set you get a free pocket book on the steel square. Worth its weight in gold." He handed the sample over. "Have a look through it."

While the young man was doing that, he sauntered out on to the landing and back. He said: "I want to make this clear. That's a fine set, but if you're looking for something advanced, forget it."

"Oh, no," said the young man. "I haven't been in the trade long."

"That's just the set for you, then," said the salesman. "And another thing. You get a lot of practical experience while you work, but these books show you how the rest of the trade fits in. That's very useful."

He told him about the binding and the number of pages and illustrations. Then the price and the credit terms.

"Ten bob a month," said the young man. "I can manage that. Any deposit?"

\* \* \*

The salesman shot him a shrewd glance. "No, thanks," he said. "We send you the books first. Pay after delivery. I'm authorised to take deposits but I never do as a rule. Only have to fill up special forms. More work." He produced a pink form. "Sign here and put your address down."

The young man did so. "Now," said the salesman, "before I take your order. You don't know us at all. Catchem, I mean. If you like, you can ask the old chippie downstairs. He had a set in his younger days. Or George." He lowered his voice. "Just between ourselves, George has ordered a set himself. Not this one, of course. A foreman's set. But don't say I told you."

"Oh, that's okay," said the young man. "Anyway, I want the books."

"Right," said the salesman. He replaced his sample. "A word of advice before I go. Don't tell the old chap downstairs you've ordered a set. It makes these old stick-in-the-muds jealous to think that a young chap is getting cleverer than they are."

"Okay. He's a grumpy old so-and-so, anyway."

"You're telling me," said the salesman.

"Seen my mate?" asked the young man. "The bricklayer next door? He'll have a set if you've got anything for brickies."

"Why, certainly," said the salesman. "We've got books for brickies. What's his name?"

"Alf Stevens."

The salesman looked at his watch. "Got an appointment in half an hour." He considered. "I'll try and squeeze him in."

"Okay," said the young man.

The salesman went into the next house. Upstairs, a dark-haired young man was handling breeze blocks.

"Hullo," said the salesman. "Haven't I seen you before?"

\* \* \*

The young man stared at him. "Don't think so."

"Funny, said the salesman. "Could have sworn I knew you. Weren't you at Hewitt and Archer's with Bill Fletcher?"

"The factory job?" asked the young man. "No."

The salesman put down his case. "Ah, well," he said, "I see so many of you chaps I often get mixed up. Never forget George, mind. The foreman, I mean. See him too often." He took out his packet of cigarettes. "Smoke?"

"No thanks," said the young man. "Chucked it ages ago."

"Good luck to you," said the salesman. "Wish I could." He struck a match. "Frank told me to come up and see you. You his mate?"

"Sure. We were at the same government training centre."

"Ah, G.T.C. boys, eh? They can't teach you much in six months, can they?" He smiled. "Catchem, I'm from. The book people."

"Oh, yes," said the young man. "I've seen some of your books."

"Well, there's plenty about," said the salesman. "There's not a man in the trade who hasn't bought some at one time or another. Frank's just ordered a set. Between you and me, so has George, but don't say anything."

"What you got?" asked the young man.

## NOW YOU TRY

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**You should stick to the theme of the story you choose but your entry must be original—not just a cut-down of the author's story.**

**Entries, marked "Competition," should be in by August 29. There will be a guinea prize for the winner and two prizes of half-a-guinea for the runners-up.**

"Two sets," said the salesman. "One a specialist job for brickies, the other a general set." He opened his case. "Here, have a squint at this. Just the sample, but there's three volumes in the set."

The young man took it and started to look through the pages.

"It's not a bad set," said the salesman casually. "Three pound ten or eight bob a month. Of course, it's pretty elementary. Sell it to all types, but youngsters mainly."

He walked over to the window and looked out, whistling. Presently, he came back and said: "Paper's the trouble. Not much about. We used to do stacks of stuff before the war. As it is, we've only got this and the general set." The young man nodded as he looked at some illustrations. "Of course, the other set's the best seller. More in it. Pukka tradesman's set. Does a lot of brickwork as well. Pretty useful if you're looking round for a foreman's job in the future. Covers a good bit of their work."

"Let's have a look," said the young man.

The salesman showed him the sample. "Four volumes on building construction. Does everything really, but concentrates on the bricklayer. Pocket book as well."

The young man was turning over the pages.

"The brickie's set is all right, mind," said the salesman, "but if you've gone past the first stages. . ."

"This looks a better job," said the young man.

"As a matter of fact," said the salesman, "George said you'd take that set if you took anything at all, but I like to let a chap see what I've got."

"How much?"

"Oh, it's dearer," said the salesman. "Five quid or ten bob a month."

The young man pursed his lips. "Five quid . . . bit too much, I'm afraid."

"Oh, nobody pays cash," said the salesman. "But ten bob a month's pretty easy generally. Two-and-six a week, that's all. You don't miss it."

"H'm," said the young man.

"The cost of twenty Woods if you want to look at it that way. Nothing to it—unless you're in debt, of course?"

"Oh, I'm not in debt," said the young man.

"Well, you can't go wrong," said the salesman. "I tell you what. You can pay your first instalment after the books come. I'm supposed to take a deposit, but we'll let that slide. George wouldn't have told me to see you if you weren't all right."

The young man considered. "Okay," he said at last. "I'll take it."

"It's a fine set of books," said the salesman and took out a pink form. "Sign here and put your address down."

\* \* \*

Outside again, he walked past the foreman's hut to his car and drove off towards the town. After a while he drew in to the kerb and beckoned a postman.

"Where's Lissman-st., Joe?" he said. "I want to get to Hewitt and Archer's."



An An Fiction

# Homage through the Post

by NICHOLAS SHELLEY

When the people of Europe buy a postage stamp they often pay tribute in a double sense — to their Government's Exchequer and to the memory of their country's great men and women.

WHEN Sir Rowland Hill, the one-time schoolmaster, introduced postage stamps to Britain and the world in 1840, he could have had no idea that they would be used to bolster the fading memory of little known literary heroes or introduce to the humblest homes of Europe exquisitely engraved reproductions of the works of the world's greatest artists. That is, in fact, what is happening today.

Likenesses of writers and artists, some famous but many obscure and almost forgotten, are replacing the more mundane and utilitarian designs of national arms and presidential heads as motifs for postage stamps.

Not only are portraits of the artists appearing but also reproductions of their better-known masterpieces. Musicians, in whose honour stamps have been issued, are represented with a few bars of music from one of their works incorporated in the design. The links between art and the Post Office are being tightened with each new issue.

We in Britain are used to stamps that are conservative in design. This is not the case abroad. Stamps are used to tell the story of national greatness, to encourage tourists—France is at present producing a set of stamps in which emphasis is laid on the tourist centres—to foster industrial recovery and commemorate national events.

Lately, however, emphasis seems to have been placed on those stamps which honour men of letters and artists, sculptors and musicians, philosophers and savants. It is difficult to say which European country introduced the idea; perhaps Bulgaria, for in 1920 a set of six stamps were issued to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the birth of Ivan Vazov.

From that day nearly 1,000 similar stamps have been issued, some more than once and many by more than one country (in particular Chopin, whose centenary has just been celebrated).



*Top: Italy's latest stamp honouring Alfieri; a Czechoslovakian Pushkin stamp issued in June; a Liechtenstein new issue honouring Rembrandt; Denmark's Hans Andersen. Bottom: Spain's Velasquez; Finland's Sibelius and France's La Fontaine.*

Britain has rendered no philatelic tribute to her notabilities. With the change in stamp-issuing policy inaugurated by the present Postmaster-General this may soon be rectified, although such new stamps that have been gracing our correspondence have been allied to national events rather than anniversaries.

Only four of Britain's men of genius have been honoured — Shakespeare, Byron, Bacon and R. L. Stevenson, and these by Hungary, Greece, Newfoundland and Samoa respectively.

Hungary, which has always been ready to honour her own heroes, recently issued a set of ten stamps for use on air-mail letters. In a fit of generosity, tinged no doubt with the desire to obtain currency, the set was dedicated to "the ten greatest

littérateurs": two British, Shakespeare and Byron; two American, Mark Twain and Edgar Allen Poe; two French, Victor Hugo and Voltaire; two Russian, Tolstoy and Maxim Gorki; a stamp in honour of Goethe and, in order to give the issue a Hungarian appeal, one for Sandor Petofi, their own famous poet who wrote the words to *Most Vagy Soha* (*Now or Never*), the song of the 1848 revolutionaries.

Each stamp has in addition to the portrait a scene from the writer's best-known work. Shakespeare appears against a background of the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*; Byron is accompanied by a scene from *Don Juan* and Gorki by a scene from *The Mother*. Byron's inclusion can only be explained by the fact that he was a freedom fighter

during the earlier European revolutionary wars. It for this reason that in 1924 two stamps dedicated to him were put on sale by the Greeks.

During the past few months the search for new stamp designs, particularly among the smaller countries who realise that attractive stamps can produce cheap revenue, has embraced reproductions of works of art. Liechtenstein, the tiny principality between Austria and Switzerland, has issued a set of nine wonderfully engraved stamps each embodying a picture from the collection of the Princes.

The stamps are square and among the pictures reproduced are *A Portrait of a Woman* by Leonardo da Vinci; Rubens's *Portrait of a Young Girl*; *Mary and the Young Child* by Memling; a self-portrait of Rembrandt and *Portrait of a Man* by Raphael. Inspiration for this set which is still current in the Principality, came from Belgium, which in a special set of charity stamps reproduced the works of Roger van der Weyden and Jacob Jordaens.

The reasons behind the issue of these and similar stamps are many. The continual flow of new stamps has occasioned much searching for suitable subjects by post-masters. This flow has been the subject of bitter argument by philatelists abroad who feel that they are being exploited by governments eager to earn valuta by producing prettily coloured labels which might, despite the fact that they are issued to defray postal fees, be rarely used for such a purpose.

On the continent and elsewhere stamps serve more than the single purpose laid down by Sir Rowland Hill and the rules of the Universal Postal Union. They are used as propaganda—albeit harmless propaganda to engender national pride. They are also used to raise funds for charities and they take the same place in the social life of the community as do our flag days. In France, for example, stamps were issued annually to raise money for a relief fund for intellectuals in economic difficulties. They were very popular and the surtax was small.

This is what happened. A stamp with a franking value of one franc would be issued. This would cost 1 franc 10 centimes at the post office, the 10 centimes surtax going to the pre-selected charity. Unfortunately this modest beginning has led to evils from the stamp-collector's point of view. The surtax has grown out of all proportion to the franking value of the stamp and the worst offender in recent years has been Belgium which not long ago issued two stamps to raise funds for a memorial to the American soldiers killed in Bastogne. The surtax on these



Top: Austria's Johann Strauss, a recent issue; Germany's Schiller (a French Zone issue). Bottom: France's Massenet and Austria's Schubert.

stamps was 62 francs 50 centimes, though the franking value was only 17 francs 50 centimes (in British money this would mean that about 10s. would have to be paid for a stamp with a franking value of 2s.).

Such then is the background to these issues which are now being collected in the new vogue for themes rather than countries. Now here are notes on the more important issues which give some idea of the immense field from which the collectors of literary, musical and artistic stamps can draw material.

Italy, which has specialized in commemorative stamps for nearly forty years must be given pride of place in any collection, for in 1930 they produced a set of nine stamps to commemorate the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Virgil, the most ancient writer yet to be honoured (though the Principality of Monaco has just issued a stamp with cave-man drawings as the main motif). Scenes from the Aeneid illustrated the Virgil set. Six years later Horace was similarly honoured and on December 1, 1941, four stamps commemorated the second millenary of the birth of Livy.

Italy has been generous to her great men. Dante, Mazzini, Manzoni, Boccaccio, Alfieri, Petrarch and Bellini are only a few names among scores. In 1932 twelve portrait stamps were issued on behalf of the Dante Alighieri Society.

There have been many such special issues but of them all I prefer a set issued in 1935 for the centenary of the death of Vincenzo Bellini in whose opera, *La Sonnambula*, Adeline Patti and Albani made their first British appearance, and which was recently turned into a ballet, *Night Shadow*. One of the values in this set depicts a pair of hands at the piano. Latest Italian addition to this collection is a further portrait of Count Victor Alfieri who found in the ideals of the early nineteenth century revolutionaries a restrained and rather severe outlet for his own political views.

Here is a brief alphabetical summary of a few of the countries and stamps which can be classified as literary, musical or artistic.

In 1922 when the countries of Central Europe were fighting a losing battle against inflation the Austrian Government launched a series of issues which are still considered some of the finest stamps produced. These stamps were intended to appear each year to raise funds for needy intellectuals. The first were issued for musicians and sold at ten times their face value in the post-offices. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Bruckner (the organist who based much of his work on that of Wagner), J. Strauss and Hugo Wolf were chosen as subjects for this set.

The following year artists were selected. Inflation was worse by then and whereas the top value of the musicians set was 100 kroner, that of a set of nine portraying artists was 1,000. In 1926 six scenes from the Nibelung legends were used to further a fund for children's charities.

Writers were honoured in the next set. These included Franz Grillparzer (a further stamp portraying him was issued a short while ago), the civil servant whose early works were acclaimed by Goethe and Beethoven and whose story of Hero and Leander, *Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen*, is probably the finest love tragedy in German literature. Also in this set is a portrait of Rosegger, the first to capture in prose the simple beauty of the Austrian dialects. Rosegger's works are better known in America than here.

Then painters again—Moritz Schwind, the great illustrator of fairy tales, appears with five others. A year later a special stamp issued in honour of an International Philatelic Exhibition was a reproduction of one of his better-known pieces . . . *The Honeymoon*.

I am glad to see that Austria has, since the war, again begun issuing many stamps in memory of her great men.

Belgium concentrated, as might be expected, more on artists than writers

and a few days before the outbreak of War II issued a set of large stamps to obtain funds for the restoration of Rubens' house in Antwerp. Dominating the set is one reproducing in a slate grey colour the *Descent from the Cross*, which is now in Antwerp Cathedral. Another value shows the *Chapeau de Paille*, which is in our own National Gallery.

Currently with this set was issued a single stamp on the occasion of an exhibition of the paintings of Hans Memling who, although born in Mainz, made his headquarters in Bruges. With his sure bright colours Memling introduced a new style of painting to Europe and the naturalness he gave to his portraits of women were a revolution in art. During the German occupation the flood of charity issues continued and just before the liberation a set in aid of the Red Cross based on the works of Van Dyck appeared. *The Good Samaritan*, *Madonna and Child*, a self portrait and the famous *St. Sebastian* were among the masterpieces used to illustrate this set.

Danzig can claim admittance to this collection with a portrait of Schopenhauer. He was born in 1788 and his philosophy of sympathy as the foundation of all morality seemed strangely in opposition to the creed of the Nazis who were to occupy Danzig while this stamp was still current.

Among the Danes who have been honoured is Hans Andersen and a set of ordinary stamps, with no surtax or conditions of sale, were issued on the occasion of the centenary of the publication of his fairy tales.

In 1835 there was published in Finland a collection of folk-lore verses which had been compiled and collected by a man called Elias Lonroth. They were the *Kalevala*, the national epic of Finland, the style of which provided the model for Longfellow's *Hiawatha*. The stories, which are centuries old and had never before been translated into the written word, deal with the conflicts of two Finnish brothers against their enemy with magic playing a major part in the story.

Among the few women honoured is Minna Canth, wife of a Finnish schoolmaster. She, too, found her inspiration in the life of the Finnish peasants. Her most characteristic novel is *Hanna*, which was published in 1886. A stamp was issued bearing her portrait in 1944, the centenary of her birth.

Sibelius, of course, has been honoured by Finland. A single stamp was issued on his 80th birthday in 1945.

France has ever been eager to honour her savants. The latest, issued recently, portrays Racine. This stamp, issued on

the 250th anniversary of his birth, has caused much comment in France particularly by those who hold dear to the greatness of French literature. During War II six stamps, bearing likenesses of 17th century celebrities were issued . . . Moliere, Louis XIV, Hardouin-Mansart (the French Jesuit who maintained that all classical literature with very few exceptions was bogus and was the work of 13th century monks), Pascal, Le Grand Conde and Colbert. The omission of Racine from this set was regarded as a slight. Now honour has been paid and Racine takes his place among a formidable gallery of French artists, musicians and men of letters. In this gallery must be included Sarah Bernhardt, so far the only great actress to be philatelically recognised.

Among the many German issues the pleasantest is, I think, one issued in 1939—Durer's portrait of a young Venetian woman, a six pfennig stamp with a nineteen pfennig surtax in aid of Hitler's Culture Fund.

It is impossible to mention in detail the many issues of Hungary or those of Jugo-Slavia, Lithuania and Latvia.

From the Netherlands comes a complete set with Franz Hal's *Laughing Child* as the centre piece, a portrait of Van Gogh and nearly fifty other famous Dutchmen. These stamps were issued for charities and they have been able to secure an advantage over other countries because for several years the Dutch have issued two sets annually.

Norway has honoured Greig and Sweden include among their issues one in honour of Nobel.

But among the countries who have honoured their great men Russia stands supreme. On every occasion when it has been at all possible to issue a stamp commemorating the birth, death or other significant date in the career of a celebrity, the Russians have done so. The stamps have always been well produced. The most interesting are a pair issued in 1932 in honour of the 40th anniversary of the publication of Maxim Gorki's *Makar Chadra*, a series of three magnificent portraits of Tolstoy in 1935 and a set of four commemorating the 80th birthday of Chekhov in 1940.

When it is remembered that since the revolution the Soviet has issued nearly 1,500 stamps, it is not surprising that they should dominate any collection devoted to the arts.

This is just a brief glimpse of the stamps issued in honour of men who have contributed to man's knowledge. It deals only with the issues of the countries of Europe and ignores the multitude of

issues made by the countries of the Americas and Asia. But whatever purpose these stamps have served, whether to raise funds for charities or delight the eyes of schoolboys, they are worthwhile in that they bring home to a great mass of people that there is more in life than atom-bombs and railway trains.

### FLASHBACK (cont. from p. 6)

ing through joke binoculars smeared with soot. They were much larger than life. Their gestures were twice as unnatural. Yet there was something tremendous about them. For years I thought that God must look something like the bearded Emil Jannings.

Every week from that dingy little cinema they whisked us to a land of never-was where anything could happen. Then one night the walls sprouted long, ugly horns, like those on an old-fashioned gramophone and halfway through the show the orchestra was silent while they showed a new kind of short called a Phonofilm.

The stars were Billie and Renee Houston and the opening titles announced proudly that we should actually be able to hear them sing. They sounded as if they had just recovered from asthma and sometimes when Miss Billie opened her mouth it was the voice of Miss Renee that came out and sometimes the other way round, but the promise was made good. We could hear them. And pretty soon a black-faced comedian (looking very unlike Mr. Larry Parks) was singing *Mammy* from that screen and the silent world of magic had slipped away.

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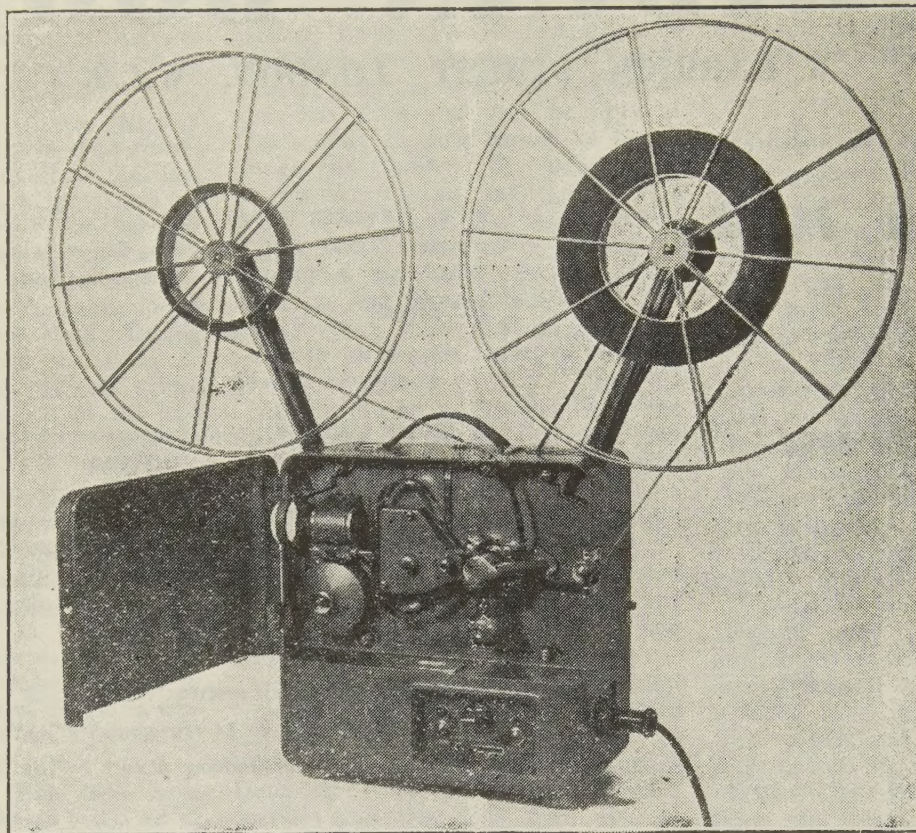
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